

Inspection of Gateshead College

Inspection dates:

28–31 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Gateshead College operates from six sites in Gateshead and the surrounding area. At the time of inspection, there were 2,524 learners on education programmes for young people. Two thirds of these learners study at level 3, almost a quarter at level two and a small proportion at entry level and level 1. There were 1,389 adult learners on programme. Adult learning programmes at entry level and level 1 make up just over half of the provision. A quarter of adult learners study at level 2 and a fifth are on level 3 programmes. There were 1,425 apprentices on programme, just over half of whom are on framework apprenticeships. There were 87 learners who have high needs; most study at the Baltic campus with a few learners on supported internship programmes in Scarborough. The college subcontracts to four organisations for apprenticeships and adult learning programmes; one very large subcontractor provides sector-based work academy courses.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners and apprentices value the care and support that college staff provide. Staff create a welcoming and inclusive environment that provides a safe and positive place to learn. Teachers have high expectations for learners' and apprentices' behaviour. Learners and apprentices behave well and enjoy their learning. Most attend regularly and are punctual.

Teachers consistently encourage and motivate learners and instil in them the confidence and resilience that they need to succeed. Adult learners are well prepared for jobs in which the workload is demanding or repetitive. Learners who have high needs flourish in a supportive environment where they are better able to manage their anxieties.

Learners and apprentices benefit from a curriculum that focuses well on the skills that they need for employment. Managers and teachers have extensive links with employers and use these links successfully to provide work placements, realistic assignment briefs and workplace projects for learners and apprentices. Learners value the significant investment that managers have made in the creative and digital industries as this prepares them well for careers in an area of significant growth locally.

Apprentices do not receive specific enough guidance from their assessors on what they need to do to improve. Staff do not ensure that employers are systematically involved in progress reviews to provide apprentices with clarity on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to develop for their job role.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

The college currently has significant financial difficulties. It has recently been subject to intervention from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Further Education Commissioner. There have been substantial changes very recently to the senior leadership and governance of the college, including the departure of the principal, who left the college in December 2019. The information that leaders have provided to governors about the college's finances over recent months has not been sufficiently accurate to enable governors to hold leaders to account for the management of resources and the college's significant financial deficit. The current financial position creates a significant risk to the future sustainability of the quality of education. Leaders and governors have very recently begun to identify actions to tackle the financial weaknesses.

Leaders and managers successfully achieve their aim of providing learners with the skills that they need for their next steps and the world of work. Teachers organise the content of their courses well. They cover topics in a coherent manner to enable learners to develop the key pieces of knowledge that they need to succeed. Consequently, younger learners and adult learners make good progress. They know more and can do more. For example, on access to higher education courses

teachers focus deeply on science-related topics such as biology in response to university requirements.

Most teachers and assessors use assessment well to identify what learners and apprentices can remember. They effectively identify gaps in learners' and apprentices' knowledge and correct misconceptions. Learners are able to skilfully apply their knowledge in new and unfamiliar tasks and situations. For example, A-level teachers identify whether learners can interpret examination command words, evaluate material and come to a reasoned conclusion in preparation for their examination.

Teachers are highly qualified and skilled in their subjects. They use their extensive vocational knowledge and teaching expertise to help learners link their knowledge to new topics. For example, teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) plan challenging activities to help learners to move quickly onto functional skills courses.

Leaders and managers successfully plan and deliver a curriculum for learners who have high needs that is acutely focused on independence and the skills that learners need for work. Managers, teachers and support staff are exceptionally ambitious for their learners and work relentlessly to enable their independence. Learners who have high needs benefit from highly effective support that helps them to progress quickly to work placements. The supported internship programme is very successful, and a high proportion of learners progress to paid employment.

Leaders and managers design and deliver a curriculum that is highly successful in developing the confidence of unemployed adult learners. Teachers use their expertise to plan training meticulously so that learners follow logical steps to build their knowledge over time. They provide activities that develop learners' resilience so that learners are prepared for the realities of working life. Consequently, most adult learners progress to their chosen next steps. A high proportion of learners on courses that prepare them for work move into employment, and those on ESOL programmes move onto further study or work.

Leaders and managers do not have sufficient oversight of the management of apprenticeship provision. Assessors do not effectively coordinate on- and off-the-job training activities. Too many apprentices experience disjointed and unstructured off-the-job training and are unable to link their training to their workplace roles. As a result, apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable in the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices benefit from assessors' extensive technical knowledge and industrial experience. Assessors use their expertise well to coach apprentices in the workplace.

Not enough teachers help younger learners to develop good English skills. Teachers do not consistently make sure that learners use language, spelling and grammar correctly. Learners are not expected to revisit their work to make improvements and continue to make the same mistakes. As a result, learners are not prepared well enough for their next steps.

Adult learners and younger learners receive helpful careers guidance. Learners applying for competitive and prestigious courses at university are supported very well to prepare for interviews. Apprentices do not receive helpful careers advice and guidance to make them aware of the opportunities available to them when they finish their apprenticeship. Apprentices who are not kept on by their employer are not prepared well enough for how to look for alternative employment.

Leaders and managers have successfully implemented a curriculum that focuses on enabling learners and apprentices to develop the skills and knowledge that they need in future careers. They work closely with employers to carefully consider local skills needs and the key knowledge that learners need for employment. Teaching staff successfully respond to changes in industry through the design of an insightful curriculum. For example, teachers in digital and media programmes plan projects which focus on ethical and social issues in the gaming industry such as gender imbalance. This builds on learners' knowledge about ethical issues and improves their ability to recognise and value difference.

Leaders and managers provide effective opportunities for teachers and assessors to develop their vocational expertise and knowledge of awarding body examination requirements. They work effectively with employers and educational experts to share knowledge and expertise to upskill teaching staff. For example, mathematics teachers use an action research project supported by university experts to practise and implement new approaches to teaching GCSE mathematical concepts. Lead practitioners use their pedagogical expertise well to support teaching staff. They provide helpful coaching and one-to-one support to develop teachers' practice in the classroom. As a result, teachers are inspired to try new approaches and activities in their teaching.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers and staff work effectively with local agencies, social care services and the police to provide support and intervention for learners and apprentices who need it. They provide helpful support and specialist intervention for mental health for learners, apprentices and staff.

Leaders and managers take appropriate precautions when recruiting staff. They check the suitability of applicants to work with learners and vulnerable adults, and have a comprehensive approach to risk assessment. Staff receive regular training regarding safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Designated safeguarding staff are well represented on local boards and safeguarding groups and are knowledgeable about local risks. However, they do not ensure that the information cascaded to staff is fully understood. Consequently, staff cannot confidently identify specific local risks to enable them to fully prepare learners to manage these risks. While learners are clear on what to do if they do not feel safe,

they are less clear about the risks that could affect them in their communities and everyday lives.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Take rapid and effective action to tackle the college's serious financial weaknesses in order to ensure the future sustainability of the quality of education.
- Ensure that managers gain effective oversight of apprenticeship provision and take appropriate action to make sure that staff take ownership for improving apprentices' progress in the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Effectively plan and coordinate apprentices' on- and off-the-job training to ensure that the knowledge and skills that apprentices develop in training are well linked to workplace expectations and tasks.
- Ensure that all teachers focus on developing learners' English skills by helping to improve learners' knowledge and their ability to apply this knowledge to their work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130551
Address	Baltic Campus Quarryfield Road Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE8 3BE
Contact number	0191 4900300
Website	www.gateshead.ac.uk/
Principal/CEO	Chris Toon
Provider type	General FE College
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2015
Main subcontractors	Sora Training Services Limited CITB The Sage Gateshead TICA

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal (quality and improvement), as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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