

# Inspection of Riverside College Halton

Inspection dates:

26 February–11 March 2020

## Overall effectiveness

## Outstanding

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

## Information about this provider

Riverside College is a medium-sized general further education college, located in Cheshire. It was formed in August 2006 following the merger of Halton College and Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College. It operates on three sites: Kingsway, Cronton Sixth Form and CRMZ. The college provides education for young people and adults through four subcontractors.

At the time of inspection, 3,202 learners were on education programmes for young people, 1,438 learners on adult learning programmes, 603 apprentices following apprenticeship frameworks and standards-based programmes, and 136 learners were in receipt of high-needs funding. Leaders offer courses in most subject areas, the largest being in A levels, health and care, business, creative arts, engineering and construction.

The college recruits a large proportion of learners from areas of high social and economic deprivation. The college is located in the 13th most deprived borough nationally and the third most deprived in the Liverpool City Region.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy a wide range of courses that meet local and regional needs exceptionally well. This helps to ensure that most learners and apprentices progress to higher levels of study or work. Staff have high expectations and want every learner and apprentice to achieve well.

Learners and apprentices are exceptionally well motivated and demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is exemplary and in keeping with the senior leaders' and staff members' high expectations and values. Learners and apprentices attend regularly, arrive to classes punctually, are well prepared and ready to learn. They flourish in a calm, orderly, aspirational and safe learning environment.

Most learners and apprentices develop rapidly the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful in the next stage of their career. Most learners who have high needs develop the skills they need to equip themselves for independent living, such as cooking simple meals and cleaning living areas.

Learners experience a wide range of work experience opportunities and, as a result, they develop higher-level interpersonal skills. Many learners enjoy taking part in a range of community events, doing voluntary work or taking part in competitions. These activities allow them to demonstrate that they are responsible and caring citizens.

Relationships between learners, apprentices and their teachers and assessors are excellent. They say that they are extremely well supported by staff and their employers. Pastoral and academic support are excellent. Teachers and assessors help learners to achieve high grades and produce work consistently to a very high standard.

Learners and apprentices, including those who need additional help, benefit from a highly inclusive learning environment. They know what they want to do next and receive the support they need to achieve it. Learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications and make very well informed decisions about their ambitious next steps.

Adults' confidence improves markedly because of the support they receive from teachers. For example, adults develop the skills they need to be able to help their children with their English homework or progress on to studying at university.

Learners and apprentices develop their confidence, resilience and strong independence skills. They talk confidently about what they now know and can do because of their learning programmes.

Learners and apprentices feel very safe at the college. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when working online.

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

Leaders have exceptional links with local employers and regional business groups, including the local enterprise partnership and regional mayoral authorities. They collaborate with them to create a challenging curriculum designed to help learners and apprentices achieve their ambitious career goals.

Managers have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that there are clear progression routes for learners and apprentices. For example, a pre-apprenticeship course prepares learners well by developing the employability skills and confidence they need to apply for a job with apprenticeship training. Managers have ensured that the vast majority of learners have access to an ambitious curriculum. For example, the science and technology curriculums are planned in collaboration with SciTech.

Managers have built very strong and highly effective relationships with subcontractors. They make sure that all subcontractors deliver a curriculum that meets local needs exceptionally well. For example, the curriculum delivered by subcontractors has reduced the number of young people and adults who are not in education, employment or training in Widnes and Runcorn. The curriculum ensures that disadvantaged learners develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. A very high proportion progress into further study, volunteering or employment.

Teachers and trainers are well qualified and benefit from high-quality professional development that develops their subject knowledge and expertise. For example, in catering, teachers have had training in chocolatiering and cake modelling. Teachers in engineering receive regular updates from specialist German engineers on renewable energy and solar systems. Senior leaders ensure that learners and apprentices benefit from high-quality up-to-date equipment and resources. For example, painting and decorating apprentices skilfully use specialist airless spray equipment while safely working on scaffolding.

Learners and apprentices enjoy an extremely well planned curriculum, which means they gain significant new knowledge and skills quickly. They gain the attitudes and behaviours they need to progress to higher levels of study or work. For example, A-level science learners gain an insight into working in medicine through meaningful work experience in the NHS. Apprentices in engineering skilfully use a milling machine to create threads and screws.

Leaders, managers and teachers have developed a high-quality curriculum that widens learners' and apprentices' experiences and life skills. Learners and apprentices plan and support charity events and projects and take part in fundraising appeals. For example, engineering apprentices designed and built equipment for the Invictus Games so that athletes with physical disabilities could take part in throwing events. Many learners compete in vocational competitions and visit local and national employers and other organisations, including universities. For example, construction learners take part in the national Skill Build

competitions. As a result, learners extend their technical, practical and life skills so that they can live productive lives and make very good progress towards their ambitious career goals.

Teachers and assessors use especially effective teaching and assessment strategies. They use learners' and apprentices' starting points very well to plan a demanding curriculum. They identify what learners and apprentices understand and can do and plan very well to address any misconceptions they may have. They teach the curriculum in a logical order, building very well on previous learning. They provide frequent opportunities for learners and apprentices to practise their skills and to recall and develop their knowledge. For example, health and social care learners gain knowledge of safeguarding and dealing with challenging behaviour before they start their work placements. Biology learners can explain the theory behind the swelling caused by sports injuries.

Assessors, in conjunction with employers, ensure that apprentices benefit from excellent and well-planned on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices receive high levels of support from their employers. For example, business administration apprentices can hone their skills in event management so that they are able to lead events independently.

Teachers and assessors place a great emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, learners and apprentices use the correct technical language fluently. For example, catering learners use the correct terms for vegetable cuts such as batons, julienne and mirepoix. They can calculate accurately the amount of ingredients needed and cooking times. Adults on beauty courses can pronounce and spell correctly the names of the muscles in the body.

Teachers and assessors make sure that learners and apprentices develop the skills they need for future study or work, such as problem-solving and communication skills. For example, learners in catering attend external commercial events, where they develop teamworking skills and better understand the pressures of the industry.

Learners who have high needs receive very effective specialist support. Managers and teachers coordinate their transition into college and specialist support very well. They use learners' education, health and care plans to identify accurately the individual support necessary. Learners who have high needs and study on vocational or academic courses make exceptional progress. Most learners on foundation learning courses make good progress. However, in a few instances, the planned curriculum does not allow the more confident learners to make progress quickly enough.

Managers, teachers and staff provide learners and apprentices with excellent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance before and during their programmes. They make well-informed and aspirational choices about their course and future career options, with only a few learners opting to change their course or leave the college.

Learners on Advanced-level programmes greatly benefit from the 'prestigious universities' programme that facilitates successful applications to universities. Consequently, most progress into higher education, with a significant number going to the best universities. There are especially high levels of achievement for learners and apprentices. A high proportion of Advanced-level learners achieve high grades on their course.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders and governors are very ambitious for their learners and apprentices. They are committed to providing a high-quality education, which means that learners and apprentices achieve their full potential. Staff at all levels have high aspirations for their learners and apprentices. Consequently, learners and apprentices who study here do exceptionally well.

Senior leaders and governors promote especially high standards in all aspects of the college. A culture of relentless self-improvement and continuous improvement permeates the college. Senior leaders accurately identify good practice and quickly address any areas requiring improvement. Consequently, learners and apprentices benefit from very high quality teaching and learning.

Governors have high aspirations for their learners, apprentices and staff. Governors are rightly very proud of what the college provides for the local community and employers in the region. Governors consistently hold senior leaders to account to sustain and further improve the quality of provision for all learners and apprentices. They act swiftly and incisively to eradicate the very few areas of underperformance.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work together to create a strong culture of safeguarding in the college. Managers are highly effective in assessing any potential risks and take swift action to prevent them. Staff have excellent relations with agencies, such as social services and the police. They identify vulnerable learners quickly and ensure that they are protected from harm and supported to continue with their studies. Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of the potential threats posed by extremist groups and know who to contact if needed. Managers ensure that learners know how to keep themselves safe online. Managers have rigorous processes to check that the staff they employ are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130622
<b>Address</b>	Kingsway Widnes Cheshire WA8 7QQ
<b>Contact number</b>	0151 2572800
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.riversidecollege.ac.uk">www.riversidecollege.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mary Murphy
<b>Provider type</b>	General Further Education College
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2015
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Crosby Training Genesis Jobs, Education and Training Power in Partnership Vikings Sports Foundation Ltd

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal, 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 learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

Andrea Machell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kim Bleasdale	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alastair Mollon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maria Rayworth	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Green	Ofsted Inspector
Jill Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Rachael Hennigan	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Gibson	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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