

# Inspection of East Durham College

Inspection dates:

28 September–1 October 2021

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

East Durham College is a medium-sized general further education college that operates from three campuses, two in Peterlee and one in Durham. The college delivers education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships across a broad range of subject areas. At the Durham campus, learners follow a range of specialist agriculture, horticulture and animal care courses and apprenticeships. Learners who have high needs attend programmes at all three of the college's campuses.

Learners live predominantly in County Durham, but a significant minority travel to the college from Teesside, North Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear. At both the main campus in Peterlee and in Durham, young people at risk of exclusion from school attend the college full-time.

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

Learners thoroughly enjoy attending and learning at the college. They participate enthusiastically in lessons, recognising the future opportunities in education and employment that their current learning can lead to. Learners enjoy participating in a wide range of additional and extra-curricular activities. These include high-profile and challenging competitions that test and extend learners' knowledge and skills, and enable them to achieve expertise.

Learners' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exceptional. Leaders, managers and staff set high expectations about how they expect learners to behave. They model positive behaviours in the different campuses, ensuring that learners and apprentices are respectful, courteous and very well-behaved in lessons, social spaces and, when relevant, in their workplaces. This creates a safe and nurturing environment which is conducive to learning.

Learners participate in lessons and training activities that are well planned and taught by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers and trainer coaches who are subject specialists. As a result, almost all learners and apprentices make good progress in developing the specialist subject knowledge and skills that they need to achieve and progress to their next steps.

Learners feel safe and know how to keep themselves and their peers safe. They know that when they experience problems or have concerns about their safety or well-being, staff will take prompt action to help them. Learners are confident that any instances of bullying that are reported will be dealt with immediately.

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

Leaders' strategic decisions about the range of subjects and types of provision that the college provides are informed well by the needs of employers and key regional partners. As a result, learners and apprentices of all ages study on programmes appropriate to their starting points that provide the opportunity for them to progress to higher levels of study, gain employment or move into alternative jobs.

Governors know the college well. They have a good awareness of its many strengths and few remaining areas that require improvement. They are committed to working with leaders to provide high-quality education and training that supports local people to overcome barriers and fulfil their potential. During the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, governors met frequently to provide support for leaders and to make timely decisions to support vulnerable learners. For example, they quickly arranged for the learner transport budget, usually used to provide free bus transport to college, to be reallocated to buying computer equipment for those learners who were most in need.

Leaders have high expectations for what learners can achieve and progress to in higher education and employment when they complete learning programmes at the

college. Senior leaders challenge and support curriculum leaders and staff in the large majority of subjects to design and teach a curriculum that enables learners and apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful.

Teachers have expert subject knowledge. They value and speak highly of the continuing professional development that they receive. As a result of this, teachers maintain up-to-date subject knowledge and essential skills as teachers, and they use these to plan and deliver effective education and training. For example, teachers in fabrication and welding use their links with the industry to ensure that the curriculum reflects up-to-date workplace practices and welding techniques.

Leaders have very high expectations and ambitions for 14- to 16-year-old learners who attend the college full-time. Learners participate well in the carefully planned curriculum of core subjects, such as English, mathematics and science, and in a range of vocational subjects, which engage them well. As a result, these young people, many of whom were at risk of permanent exclusion from school, are successfully nurtured to succeed.

Teachers sequence and teach the curriculum in a logical way so that content builds on prior learning and enables learners on education programmes for young people to strengthen their knowledge and skills over time. The education that learners experience prepares them well to achieve their learning goals and career aspirations. For example, in animal care, teachers ensure that all learners gain and can apply the knowledge and skills they need to handle and care for domesticated animals such as small mammals. When learners have mastered this, teachers help them to make well-informed choices to follow either science or husbandry pathways at level 3 in which teachers increase the complexity of theoretical and practical learning to extend and deepen learners' knowledge and skills. This prepares learners well to gain employment in the region.

Leaders and teachers ensure that adults can follow well-sequenced learning programmes, including distance learning courses, that help them to gain or progress in employment. The careful sequencing and expert delivery of the curriculum in access to midwifery and nursing enables adults to progress to universities to study higher education programmes that lead to careers in skills shortage areas within the NHS. English, mathematics and employability courses help adults to gain the essential knowledge and skills that employers require.

Leaders and managers have a clear rationale for the apprenticeship programme and ensure that the curriculum offer meets the principles of apprenticeships. The bricklaying apprenticeship helps to support the local house building industry to address a skills shortage. The curriculum for the teaching assistant apprenticeship successfully meets the needs of school leaders. The range of apprenticeships in horticulture, forestry and equine studies meets well the needs of employers in these sectors.

College staff work successfully with employers to develop a well-sequenced curriculum for apprentices. Staff ensure that employers have a good understanding of the apprenticeship standards that apprentices are working towards and the on-the-job training that they can provide to help apprentices make good progress in gaining the knowledge and skills that they need. To help them in their future careers, bricklaying apprentices are taught and practice how to successfully complete decorative brickwork, which develops their skills beyond that required to achieve the level 2 apprenticeship standard.

Leaders and managers ensure that the funding they receive for learners with high needs is used effectively in order to support and meet the needs of individual learners. As a result, learners who have high needs are provided with the specialist support and assistive technologies that they need to engage in learning and to make progress. The sequencing of the curriculum within the specialist provision for learners who have autism spectrum disorder helps these learners to improve their communication skills, gain in confidence and prepare for adult life.

Teachers assess learners' and apprentices' starting points thoroughly when they commence learning. This includes identifying aspects of learning missed because of the restrictions caused by COVID-19. Teachers use effectively a variety of assessment methods during courses, to check that learners and apprentices understand what they have been taught and, through this, identify and take action to close any gaps. Teachers regularly assess learners' knowledge and skills of key concepts so that learners make links to new learning. Teachers effectively use questioning to reinforce learning, frequently probing further to check that learners and apprentices remember more and know more.

Teachers plan activities within the curriculum that help to develop and reinforce learners' and apprentices' knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. Through relevant subject-related learning activities, most learners improve their knowledge and skills in English and mathematics and their ability to apply these in their subject areas. Adults on access courses learn how to improve the structure and composition of their written work. Younger learners on fabrication and welding courses learn how to calculate and set out angles accurately. Arborist apprentices make good progress in developing the technical language that they need to be effective in their jobs.

Leaders and managers have taken swift and appropriate action in response to national concerns about sexual harassment and abuse. They have added capacity to the college's pastoral team to deal promptly with any reported concerns and have provided staff with additional training to raise their awareness of the issues. Learners recognise the college's campuses as safe and calm environments.

Leaders ensure that learners of all ages and apprentices receive effective impartial careers advice and guidance throughout their time at the college. As a result, learners and apprentices make appropriate plans for their future careers and have a good understanding of the steps that they need to take to be successful.

Learners participate in a wide range of activities that support their personal development. They engage in community action projects and participate in the college's sports academies. Younger learners learn about British values and the importance of respecting other people. Staff provide guidance for younger learners to help them stay physically and mentally well. Although the curriculum for apprentices and adult learners also includes these topics, they are not covered as extensively as they are for learners on programmes for young people.

Teachers of vocational and academic subjects who have learners who have high needs in their groups do not consistently take sufficient account of the detailed information recorded in the education and health care plans about the support and learning needs of these learners. As a result, in a few instances, teachers do not consider well enough how they can adapt their approaches to teaching so that these learners engage fully in learning activities and make the best possible progress.

Managers and teachers do not take action early enough to identify any additional learning and support needs that adult learners may have. They rely either on adults making self-declarations or staff identifying any support needs once learners have started their course. This can result in support needs being identified late or missed altogether.

Staff responsible for the curriculum followed by apprentices on the teaching assistant apprenticeship standard do not structure or sequence the training well enough to enable apprentices to develop quickly the theoretical knowledge that they need to support them in their jobs. Apprentices complete self-study modules which contain set questions which they research and answer. A few apprentices, particularly those new to the programme, find this too challenging, and their employers struggle to know how what they can do to support their apprentices to complete the modules.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors give safeguarding a high priority. This results in a strong culture of safeguarding, which permeates the college. Any concerns raised about the safety and well-being of learners are dealt with swiftly. Where necessary, leaders involve external agencies.

Leaders ensure that policies to underpin effective safeguarding, including for the 'Prevent' duty, are in place. The designated lead for safeguarding and the team he leads have a good understanding of the kind of safeguarding issues that learners can experience, including sexual harassment and abuse. They use this knowledge to inform the curriculum content for tutorials and apprentices' reviews, and to deliver staff training and briefings.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that staff teaching vocational and academic courses make good use of the detailed information in the education and health care plans of learners with high needs so that their approaches to teaching and training meet the individual needs of these learners.
- Ensure that any additional learning and support needs that adult learners may have are identified at the start of their programmes so that appropriate support can be provided to enable these learners to remain on their courses, make good progress and achieve.
- Ensure that all apprentices benefit from well-structured and well-sequenced training so that they make good progress in developing the theoretical knowledge they need to support them in their jobs.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131859
<b>Address</b>	Willerby Grove Peterlee County Durham SR8 2RN
<b>Contact number</b>	0191 518 2000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.eastdurham.ac.uk">www.eastdurham.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Suzanne Duncan
<b>Provider type</b>	Further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 January 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal of curriculum and performance, 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 visiting 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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