

# Inspection of Bishop Auckland College

Inspection dates: 16–19 November 2021

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

## Information about this provider

Bishop Auckland College is a medium-sized general further education college serving County Durham and parts of Darlington. The college provides education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships across a broad range of vocational subjects. The college also has programmes for students with high needs and for full-time students aged 14 to 16.

In addition to its main campus in Bishop Auckland, the college has recently opened the Durham Gateway in Spennymoor for students aged 14 to 16. It delivers plumbing apprenticeships and courses at the South West Durham Training Centre in Newton Aycliffe, a wholly owned subsidiary of the college.

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

Apprentices and students, including students with high needs on vocational programmes, develop significant new skills, knowledge and behaviours. This enables most of them to progress onto courses leading to higher-level qualifications or into employment.

Students behave well in lessons and around the campus. They are polite and respectful of others. Most students attend their lessons and arrive on time ready to learn.

Employers value the way that teachers develop apprentices' professional standards in off-the-job training. This is reflected in the positive manner in which apprentices conduct themselves with clients in the workplace.

Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities that help them to develop an understanding of how they can contribute as active citizens to their wider communities. For example, students on catering courses run a lunch club for Age UK County Durham, where they cook and serve all the meals. Students in public services organised a coffee morning to raise funds for local veterans.

Students develop their personal confidence and widen their cultural horizons through, for example, the opportunities that they have to travel abroad and experience different cultures. The college has accessed the new Turing funds to send 15 students, including some students with high needs, on an educational visit to Italy.

Students of all gender identities gain a good understanding of how to conduct consensual relationships through the well-designed tutorial programme.

Students benefit from impartial and independent careers advice to make considered choices about their next steps into further education and employment. Apprentices, however, do not routinely gain access to advice about higher qualifications or alternative career options.

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

Leaders and managers have successfully tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. They have strengthened their approach to managing attendance and to setting clear expectations for students about the requirement to attend their lessons and turn up on time. The weaknesses in the teaching of apprenticeships and education programmes for young people have been addressed; apprentices and students now make good progress from their starting points.

Leaders and managers work effectively with strategic partners and employers in the locality and the wider region to adapt the curriculum to take advantage of current

economic opportunities and to tackle the challenges caused by the pandemic. They have invested in new digital skills facilities to enable students to gain the coding and programming skills that employers in the sector want. They have developed new progression routes into higher education in counselling and sports science.

Leaders and managers show a strong commitment to providing education for the most disadvantaged members of their local communities. Since opening the new Durham Gateway campus for full-time students aged 14 to 16, they have increased the number of students enrolled on courses. The great majority of these students have been excluded from mainstream education and now have somewhere to learn where they feel welcome. As a result, students attend their courses and make positive progress towards further education and employment.

Leaders and managers use current research into the most effective techniques of teaching to inform the professional development programmes that all teachers attend. New teachers and those needing to improve their practice are assigned mentors to support them with the development of teaching skills. As a result, the quality of teaching is good in most areas of the college's provision.

Most teachers feel that leaders and managers are considerate about their workloads. The morale of teachers and other staff in the college is high.

Governors draw on their considerable experience in industry, economic regeneration and education to provide effective challenge and support to senior leaders at the college. For example, they supported the senior leadership team to weigh up the balance of risks and opportunities before deciding to invest in the new Durham Gateway campus. Governors provide prudent oversight of the financial position of the college, with the result that they can invest in improving teaching and learning resources to the benefit of students.

Managers and teachers plan and teach the curriculum effectively so that students and apprentices build their conceptual understanding and develop practical skills in a coherent way. For example, at the Durham Gateway, staff ensure that students develop their mathematical skills in the subjects that they are studying, such as learning about ratios in construction classes to calculate the mix for mortar.

Teachers identify students' and apprentices' starting points accurately to plan teaching and to set clear objectives in line with career goals. Teachers of photography spend time at the beginning of the programme checking students' prior knowledge and experience of camera types, manual settings and composition. This enables them to place students on the right level of programme and to plan activities that will challenge students based on their starting points.

Teachers draw on students' prior knowledge and understanding when starting new topics within subject areas. For example, on the adult access to humanities course, teachers reminded students that they had already covered the concepts of discrimination and incitement when studying Black history. As a result, students

were able to apply these concepts fluently when they started a module on Irish history.

Most teachers provide effective teaching in lessons. They break down concepts and skills into small segments, and they assess students' understanding before incrementally increasing the complexity of tasks once students have demonstrated that they understand the concept or can apply the skill. For example, carpentry and joinery students complete work in health and safety and specific joints before moving on to more-complex tasks, including setting up a frame using a range of joints.

Most teachers support students effectively to develop their knowledge and skills and to commit them to their long-term memory. For example, construction teachers reinforce and check students' understanding of brick bonds through frequent questioning. As a result, students can recall this knowledge when they need to apply it in practice.

Most teachers use a range of assessment methods well to check students' and apprentices' knowledge and skills. Teachers of GCSE mathematics plan frequent low-stake tests to check students' knowledge and prepare them for examinations. Staff at the Durham Gateway have 'Feedback Fridays' to ensure that students catch up on missed learning each week.

Teachers provide helpful feedback that specifies clearly how students can improve their work and practical skills. For example, through practical assessments, teachers of bricklaying advise students on how to improve bonds by making them narrower. Adult students on access to higher education programmes improve their writing skills through feedback on sentence structures, the correct use of apostrophes, and how to reference assignments following the recognised conventions.

Provision for students with high needs is the one area of the college's activity where the curriculum lacks ambition. Students at entry level with complex needs do not follow programmes that are effectively planned and taught to meet their individual needs. They complete an employability qualification that is not appropriate for students developing independent living skills. Teachers do not use technology and age-appropriate resources sufficiently well to enable students to understand and remember key concepts in subjects such as English and mathematics. In contrast, students with high needs on vocational courses benefit from the ambitious curriculum available on education programmes for all students aged 16 to 18.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive and regularly updated set of policies and procedures to ensure that they keep their students safe.

A team of appropriately trained and experienced designated leads work effectively to identify and support students who experience a wide and growing range of safeguarding risks. For example, compared to this time last year, the number of notified safeguarding concerns has doubled as students have emerged from lockdown. There has been an increase in reports of self-harming, sexual abuse and mental health anxieties. Leaders and managers have responded promptly by appointing new specialist staff to support students reporting these concerns.

Leaders and managers have a zero-tolerance approach to incidents of sexual harassment and abuse. They act swiftly to investigate any reported incidents and use appropriate disciplinary measures when investigations are completed. Staff have enhanced the tutorial programme to reinforce students' understanding of how to conduct consensual relationships.

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

- Ensure that managers and teachers design an ambitious and appropriate curriculum for students with complex needs so that these students can develop their independent living skills.
- Ensure that teachers of students with complex needs use the most up-to-date and age-appropriate resources, including digital technologies, when teaching.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive impartial and independent careers advice at different stages in their programmes so they can decide their next steps.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130657
<b>Address</b>	Woodhouse Lane Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 6JZ
<b>Contact number</b>	01388 443000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://bacoll.ac.uk/">https://bacoll.ac.uk/</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Natalie Davison-Terranova
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November–19 December 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	N/A

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal curriculum and quality, 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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