

Inspection of New City College

Inspection dates: 30 November to 3 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

New City College is a large general further education college with campuses across London and Essex. The nine college campuses are based in the London Boroughs of Havering, Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and one in Epping Forest in Essex.

The college formally changed its name to New City College in February 2017 as a result of five predecessor college mergers. Tower Hamlets College merged with Hackney Community College in August 2016. Redbridge College joined the group in April 2017. Epping Forest College joined in August 2018. The most recent to join were Havering College of Further and Higher Education, and Havering Sixth Form College in August 2019.

New City College has a broad curriculum offer in most subject areas for full- and part-time learners from entry level to level 5. The largest areas for education programmes for young people are creative arts and media, and business administration. A significant proportion of the adult provision is English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and English and mathematics.

New City College offers standards-based apprenticeship programmes in a range of subjects from level 2 through to level 5. A high proportion of apprentices complete level 2 and level 3 programmes within the construction trades and in business administration.

At the time of the inspection there were 16,975 learners enrolled at the college. Of these, 9,048 were on education programmes for young people, 7,262 were on adult learning programmes, 598 were on apprenticeship programmes. There were 672 learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have education and health care plans and for whom the college receives high needs funding.

New City College has full-time alternative provision for learners aged 14 to 16. Learners are based at Ardleigh Green in Havering and Arbour Square in Tower Hamlets. At the time of the inspection, there were 67 learners aged 14 to 16.

At the time of the inspection the college worked with 12 subcontractors to teach courses within the community to 2,461 learners. The largest subcontractors are The Skills Network, Learning Curve Group and Jtag Ltd. The college also subcontracts to Get Set Girls (Beth Jacob Teachers' Seminary) and Beer Miriam Seminary, who teach programmes of study to female learners within the Orthodox Jewish community.

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

Learners and apprentices thrive in the supportive and friendly environment created by staff. As a result of what they have been taught by teachers, most learners and apprentices know more and can do more. They develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours that prepare them well for their futures.

Staff have high expectations that learners and apprentices are keen to meet. They create a purposeful learning environment, where learners and apprentices respect one another. Most learners and apprentices adopt behaviour that reflects the standards expected at work. For example, in lessons, they are punctual and listen carefully to instructions. As a result, teachers ensure that lessons are fully focused on work and learning.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at college. They very much value the presence of staff and the security team around the campuses because their presence gives them a real sense of security.

Learners and apprentices value the high-quality resources and facilities available to them at the college. They particularly like the organised and well-resourced study spaces where they can learn independently.

Learners and apprentices benefit by learning in an environment where everyone is valued equally. Everyone is encouraged to get involved in the college community. Learners particularly enjoy learning about the different cultural backgrounds of their peers. Learners who have high needs are well supported by staff to access communal social areas of the college, such as common rooms and food outlets.

Most learners have access to and enjoy very interesting extra-curricular activities. They value the opportunity to attend a wide range of student union groups, clubs and sporting activities. These activities help learners to develop important skills that they will need in the workplace and in their communities. Learners who have high needs develop good social, employability and communication skills through taking part in these activities. However, on a small number of programmes and at Havering Sixth Form campus, the way programmes are timetabled restricts learners from participating in these activities.

Most learners develop good additional knowledge and skills beyond what is required in their academic or vocational studies through taking part in a broad range of additional activities. For example, in hairdressing, adult learners benefit from demonstrations of new hair treatments from industry experts. ESOL learners visit local tourist attractions to learn about local history that is relevant to their culture and background.

Most learners are aware of progression opportunities available to them and feel well informed about their next steps. The well-trained careers team provides learners

with suitable advice on wide range of higher-level courses, apprenticeships, universities and employment opportunities.

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

Governors and leaders have carefully and successfully managed the merger process of six colleges as New City College. Leaders are successfully achieving consistency in the quality of education for subjects taught at multiple sites by having specific leadership and management of subject areas across the college campuses. As a result, leaders and managers have secured steady improvements, which have resulted in year-on-year improvements to learners' experiences and outcomes.

Governors have good expertise and provide effective support and challenge to senior leaders. They know the college well and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a strong focus from governors and leaders on continuing to improve consistency in the quality of provision across the college in areas such as construction and engineering, English and mathematics and at Havering GFE campus.

Leaders and governors work very effectively with local stakeholders, including local authorities and employers, to shape the diverse curriculum offer at each campus. As a result, each campus has retained its unique features. The curriculum meets the needs of specific learners, employers and local communities very well. For example, in liaison with local authorities, leaders have introduced successful bespoke provision for 14- to 16-year-olds in Tower Hamlets and in Havering.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is a coherent and broad curriculum offer for learners aged 14 to 16 from pre-entry to GCSE. Teachers have very good knowledge of their learners, who have very different previous experiences of education. They adapt the curriculum to meet the varying needs of learners. For example, in the entry level and level 1 science curriculum, teachers include knowledge of atoms and cells, so that learners know about these topics when they study GCSE science. As a result, learners achieve well and are ready for their next steps to further education programmes.

Leaders and managers have created a broad curriculum offer for young learners to meet their varying needs and career aspirations. Leaders have designed clear progression routes from entry level through to level 3. For example, the wide range of A-level courses meets the needs of learners who wish to pursue higher levels of study, predominantly at University.

In most programmes for young learners, teachers have developed curriculum plans which are logically sequenced to allow learners and apprentices to build their knowledge and skills over time. Teachers revisit key topics throughout the programmes, to ensure that learners and apprentices can recall and use the knowledge they have been taught. For example, in A-level mathematics, staff start

by recapping key topics from the GCSE syllabus before moving on to more complex topics, including circle theorems and basis statistics.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of the apprenticeship programmes. They have ensured curriculum managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to apprentices. This includes ensuring apprentices benefit from the same standard of teaching and learning as those learners on full-time courses. As a result, apprentices experience good-quality teaching and learning which supports them to make progress.

Leaders and managers have developed a number of different ambitious programmes for learners who have complex high needs. Teachers teach learners the skills and knowledge they need so they develop independent living and employment skills that help them to participate in their communities and prepare them well for their next steps in adult life. As a result, learners make good progress and develop the skills and knowledge that are closely aligned to their individual needs and aspirations. For example, learners with complex and profound needs learn about personal hygiene. They are able to use an interactive board to match pictures of everyday objects they use to keep themselves clean.

Staff provide effective support for learners with high needs. Teachers and learning support staff carefully tailor teaching and support to learners' individual learning needs to help them to be successful. As a result, learners can remember what they have been taught and can put practical skills into action. For example, in hospitality and catering, learners with high needs develop skills and knowledge on how to provide effective silver service to customers.

Managers and teachers work closely with local agencies and employers to enable learners who have high needs to participate in a range of work-related activities. Learners participate in a variety of events with employers, such as enterprise projects and work placements. For example, they take part in enterprise projects and make items to sell in a community setting. As a result, learners gain a sense of pride and self-worth by contributing to the economy and to their communities.

Teachers do not consistently ensure that targets set for learners who have high needs are sufficiently specific. They are often too generic and do not focus enough on the specific steps learners need to work towards. As a result, staff cannot always accurately assess learners' progress towards achieving their targets.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of local employment needs. They plan how they can develop adult learners' skills to meet these needs through the introduction of digital skills qualifications.

Teachers carefully consider the content of courses so that adult learners expertly build their knowledge so they can apply this practically. Teachers ensure that the curriculum builds in complexity over the duration of the programme. For example, in hairdressing, teachers teach learners about the structure of different hair types and how they grow, before learners move on to practical haircutting using hair blocks

and live clients. As a result, learners develop good knowledge and practical skills on their courses.

Teachers plan and teach the content of the apprenticeship curriculum in a logical order so that apprentices develop complex knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Teachers revisit key topics to ensure apprentices remember them as they progress through their programme. For example, electrical installation apprentices learn about component parts and their properties in depth, before planning the designs for full circuits. As a result, apprentices can successfully apply what they have learned at college and in their jobs.

Teachers have a very good knowledge of their learners. They carry out thorough assessments at the start of the programme to ensure that learners join courses at the right level. They monitor learners' progress closely from their starting points. As a result, learners and apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, in ESOL teachers accurately identify learners' existing knowledge of English. They use this information effectively in order to ensure that learners are on the right level of course and have an appropriate personalised plan of learning.

Teachers are specialists in the subjects that they teach. Most teachers make effective use of teaching strategies, such as group activities and discussions, to teach learners and apprentices new and complex topics. As a result of what learners and apprentices have been taught, most develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, teacher training apprentices gain new knowledge on how to manage challenging behaviour from children.

Most teachers use effective strategies in lessons to encourage learners and apprentices to think more deeply about what they know and how they can apply it. For example, in construction, teachers question learners about what they can remember about the process involved in preparing a wall for wallpapering or painting. As a result, learners can explain in detail the new knowledge they develop and can put practical skills into action.

Teachers promote diversity well in the programmes they teach. They plan opportunities for learners and apprentices to develop knowledge that will help them in their careers. For example, hairdressing learners are taught about different hair types and different cutting techniques for Asian and Afro-Caribbean hair.

Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of fundamental British values and how they influence their life at college and in their future careers. Through the tutorial curriculum, teachers teach learners about citizenship, rights and responsibilities, tolerance and respect. As a result, learners have a good understanding and can reflect on these and apply them to their studies well. For example, through class debates, learners develop good characteristics, such as respect and tolerance towards their peers.

Teachers provide learners with good opportunities in the curriculum to develop their awareness of important social issues and the impact on local communities. Through project-based activities learners understand the contribution they can make to wider

society so that they can be responsible citizens. For example, in A-level architecture, learners develop an awareness of how they can contribute to a sustainable environment in their career. They know how to use materials ethically in their designs, such as repurposed metals.

Teachers select appropriate activities in lessons that prepare learners well to work in vocational industries. For example, teachers in media select inspiring, contemporary project briefs that take learners through a demanding process from creation to pitching to clients. As a result, learners raise their awareness of the competitive industry process of winning commissions.

Most teachers provide learners and apprentices with frequent, useful feedback on their work, which tells them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Teachers use their understanding of what learners have remembered correctly, and any misconceptions that they have, to plan their next lessons. As a result, teachers are able to close learners' gaps in knowledge. However, teachers do not provide precise enough feedback in their work or in annual reviews to learners who have high needs. As a result, it is not clear to learners, parents or teachers what steps learners need to take to improve their work and progress.

In a small number of occasions, managers and teachers do not communicate effectively with apprentices' employers. Staff do not sufficiently understand how apprentices apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace. As a result, too many employers are not clear about the progress their apprentices make and are not able to plan learning at work.

Teachers and assessors prepare apprentices well for their final assessments. Apprentices have suitable opportunities to practice elements of final assessments, such as mock professional discussions and presentations. As a result, the majority achieve their qualifications. A high proportion of apprentices on the team leading and teacher training apprenticeship programmes achieve distinctions.

In the majority of programmes, a high proportion of learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications and progress to positive destinations at the end of their programme, despite the challenges of COVID-19. The vast majority return to further education or go on to higher education, supported internships or employment. A high proportion of learners who go to university gain places at the university of their first choice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a highly inclusive environment for learners and apprentices across the campuses. Staff have an excellent understanding of the range of local risks in the community that learners and apprentices, including those aged 14 to 16, may come across. Leaders have appropriate measures and training in place to

ensure learners are safe. For example, learners receive training to raise their awareness on the risks associated with county lines and violent gang crime.

The rigorous safeguarding processes enable designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) to provide effective support and care to learners and apprentices, including learners aged 14 to 16.

DSLs are well qualified and experienced. They have very good relationships with external partners, such as the police and social services, that help to promote learners' and apprentices' safety and well-being when at college, with employers and in their communities.

Learners and apprentices feel safe, including learners in subcontracted settings, such as seminaries. They know who to talk to if they have concerns about their well-being or safety.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should continue to improve the quality of provision in construction and engineering, English, mathematics and Havering College of Further Education campus.
- Leaders should improve the communication with apprentices' employers so that they sufficiently plan how apprentices apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace.
- Teachers should provide learners who have high needs with precise targets and feedback so that learners know what steps to take to achieve their goals.

Provider details

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Website	www.ncclondon.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Gerry McDonald
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	9 December 2013
Main subcontractors	Access to Music Beer Miriam Seminary Bromley by Bow Centre Cano Training Services Ltd Get Set Girls (Beth Jacob Teachers' Seminary) Jtag Ltd Learning Curve Group New Generation Training and Consultancy St Johns RC Special School STC Group The Skills Network Vista Education and Training Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal of Havering campuses 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.

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