

Inspection of HCUC (Harrow College & Uxbridge College)

Inspection dates: 22–25 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Information about this provider

Harrow College and Uxbridge College is a large general further education college with four campuses situated in north-west London. The campuses are based in the London boroughs of Hillingdon and Harrow.

At the time of the inspection there were 9,422 learners at the college. Of these, 5,776 were on education programmes for young people; 3,011 were on adult learning programmes; and 635 were on apprenticeship programmes. There were 532 learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have education, health and care (EHC) plans and for whom the college receives high needs funding.

HCUC has a broad curriculum offer across each of its main campuses. Collectively, the college teaches programmes in all 15 of the subject sector areas to full and part-time learners from entry level to level 5. The largest areas for education programmes for young people are in English, mathematics, science and technology, ICT, business and art and media. A significant proportion of the adult

provision is English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English and mathematics.

HCUC offers apprenticeship programmes in a range of subjects from level 2 to level 5. A high proportion of apprentices complete level 2 and level 3 programmes within the areas of engineering, early years, business and retail.

At the time of the inspection the college had learners at two subcontractors. There were 177 learners on adult learning programmes and five apprentices at these subcontractors. The largest subcontractor is The Skills Network.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings.

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

Learners and apprentices at HCUC are highly motivated to learn and achieve. They thrive in their studies and are inspired by their lessons. They benefit hugely from being in a learning environment where staff encourage them to achieve their best.

Learners and apprentices consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. In lessons and tutorials, teachers encourage learners to express their own ideas, including on stimulating topics such as the conflict between science and religion. Teachers create a culture where learners listen to, understand and are highly tolerant of each other's views, even when they are different to their own. Learners' behaviour in lessons, around the college and in the workplace is exemplary.

Learners receive excellent support from their teachers and support staff. Vulnerable learners, including learners who have been affected by domestic violence and those with mental health needs receive exceptional emotional support from staff. As a result, learners' confidence significantly improves.

Learners who have low starting points appreciate the support and challenge that they receive from their teachers. Teachers help learners to understand what they need to do to improve. A significant majority of learners and apprentices successfully achieve their qualifications and progress to higher-level courses, universities, and sustained employment.

Learners and apprentices speak very positively about the high-quality advice and guidance they receive, which helps them to plan their future careers. Learners, including those with high needs and apprentices, are ambitious to achieve high standards of work and to progress on to careers of their choice. They feel well informed and enthusiastic about their next steps.

Learners have access to a broad range of enrichment activities at the college. They join clubs and participate in sports, community projects and competitions, which enable them to develop knowledge and skills beyond what is required in their qualifications. However, too many learners and apprentices do not know what activities are available to them. Some activities are held at the same time as their lessons. Consequently, learners' participation in these activities is low.

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

Since the merger, governors and leaders have successfully established a shared vision and ethos for the college. They communicate this vision successfully to their staff, learners, and partners. Leaders and staff have developed a culture of academic excellence. They have a clear strategy to provide their learners with a rich and high-quality curriculum offer which meets effectively the economic and social needs of their local communities.

Leaders and managers work exceptionally well with local employers. Partner organisations report that the college is successful in its aim to raise aspirations in their local area. For example, leaders have set up the Institute of Technology in partnership with Brunel University to inspire learners from different backgrounds to consider careers in engineering.

Leaders and managers have set exceptionally high standards for the performance of their teachers. They monitor the quality of teaching rigorously. Leaders set clear performance targets to guide and support teachers. When teachers require additional support, teaching and learning mentors provide this swiftly. Consequently, the quality of teaching is consistently high.

Governance arrangements are highly effective. Governors bring a wealth of wide-ranging experience to the board. They have the appropriate expertise to support and shape the strategic direction of the college, including the development of the curriculum. Governors have excellent knowledge of the college and understand its strengths and areas for improvement. They support and challenge senior leaders well to secure improvements.

Staff ensure that learners and apprentices receive effective advice and guidance before starting their programmes. A high proportion of learners and apprentices remain on their courses. Teachers use the assessment of learners' prior knowledge and skills well to inform their teaching and set learners appropriate individual learning goals. In ESOL, staff use this information very effectively to put learners on specific pathways that meet their needs.

Leaders ensure that learners and apprentices, including those with high needs, have access to high-quality resources. For example, at the Harrow Weald campus, teachers make highly effective use of industry standard facilities including a hospital ward to teach learners on health and social care programmes the skills they need to be successful in the workplace.

Curriculum managers and teachers ensure that curriculum content is planned in a logical way. For example, in GCSE mathematics, teachers start with basic number skills such as the four rules of number, fractions and decimals before teaching higher-level concepts such as algebra. Young learners and adults on GCSE English programmes learn to infer from text early in the course. This forms the foundation for the more-demanding tasks of comprehension, analysis, and comparison of texts that follow. Consequently, learners and most apprentices gradually build a high level of knowledge and skills over time.

Adult learners have access to highly effective sector-based work programmes that are closely tailored to employers' vacancies. Staff provide learners with useful interview practice and CV writing skills for specific jobs. For instance, staff teach learners the customer service skills they need to deal with passengers in challenging circumstances when applying for customer-facing jobs at Heathrow Airport. As a result, learners are well prepared for their interviews, and most gain and sustain employment.

Apprenticeship staff work collaboratively with employers to identify the most appropriate programmes and optional units that match apprentices' roles and responsibilities. For

example, in hairdressing, apprentices choose from either hair extension or perming units, depending on the needs of their salon. Consequently, apprentices improve their confidence and technical skills and become valued members of their teams.

Apprentices have well-structured opportunities to practice in advance the different elements of their final assessments such as professional discussions and presentations. Most apprentices complete their qualifications, and many achieve distinction grades.

In a few apprenticeship programmes, teachers do not sequence learning well enough. For example, in electrical installation and dental nursing programmes, teachers teach some knowledge and skills that are more complex before thoroughly teaching basic theories. As a result, staff must reteach topics to ensure apprentices' foundation knowledge is secure.

Learners with high needs benefit from good-quality individual learning programmes. Teachers encourage learners to be independent and support them to develop their own strategies for learning to avoid over-reliance on staff. Teachers offer learners a wide range of employment opportunities. These work placements help learners to develop their communication and work skills. As a result, a high proportion of supported internship learners gain employment at the end of their programme.

In discrete provision for learners with high needs, teachers plan an effective curriculum which enables learners to meet the targets set out in their EHC plans. Learners attend highly individualised programmes such as supported internships, which allow them to develop their independence and other essential skills required for work and adult life. A high proportion of learners with EHC plans who study vocational programmes achieve their qualifications. However, teachers do not consistently incorporate sufficient opportunities for learners to work towards the achievement of their EHC plan outcomes. Teachers in English and mathematics do not plan curriculums that meet the individual needs of learners with high needs. Consequently, too few learners achieve these qualifications.

Teachers challenge learners to stretch their thinking and deepen their understanding of complex topics. For example, in sports, teachers use a range of emergency scenarios to teach learners leadership skills such as problem-solving and delegation in high pressure situations. Teachers use their subject knowledge expertly to ensure that learners master new knowledge and skills and achieve high proficiency in their subjects. They explain key concepts thoroughly and correct misconceptions swiftly when they arise. As a result, learners learn exceptionally well and make excellent progress towards their individual targets.

Teachers provide learners with highly effective developmental feedback on their work. Learners are clear on what they need to do to improve their work and achieve the high grades they aspire towards. Consequently, most learners and apprentices produce work of a high standard and perform exceptionally well in their examinations and assessments.

Staff set high expectations and clear targets for attendance in both learning and workplace settings. Leaders and managers have implemented strategies to improve

attendance and learners who have been absent are well supported to catch up on any lost learning.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, only a small number of learners completed work experience last year. Leaders have clear plans in place for most learners to catch up on work experience towards the end of this year. However, not all learners are fully aware of these plans and how they will access work experience.

The vast majority of learners and apprentices have a good understanding of fundamental British values and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They reflect well on how these apply to their lives. In lessons, learners discuss how to create an inclusive learning environment by respecting other learners' points of view and by displaying mutual respect and tolerance.

Through a comprehensive tutorial programme, staff teach learners about the impact of different social issues on their lives and the lives of others. For example, in science lessons, teachers discuss with learners the impact of different beliefs and cultures on patients' expectations of treatment, for instance when dealing with genetic diseases. Staff also teach learners about how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of exercise for maintaining positive mental and physical health.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors and senior leaders have a very clear oversight of safeguarding. The designated safeguarding leads and the safeguarding team are highly trained. They have rigorous safeguarding procedures in place.

Staff record and deal with safeguarding concerns effectively. They have very strong links with external partners such as the local police, the London 'Prevent' duty coordinator, social services and mental health support charities. They work closely with their partners to keep learners and apprentices safe at the college, at work, and in their local communities.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the local risks that learners and apprentices may face at each of their campuses. They take appropriate actions to help learners stay safe. For example, learners attend focused events, listen to guest speakers and have tutorials on topical issues such as the risks of knife crime and the dangers of illegal drug use.

Learners feel safe and know who to contact if they have concerns. Learners value the presence of the college security team and cameras around the campuses as these measures give them a feeling of security. They understand what appropriate sexual behaviour is and believe that incidents of bullying and harassment will not be tolerated at the college.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that learners and apprentices are aware of the enrichment opportunities available at the college to improve participation in these activities.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers of mainstream subjects make consistent use of EHC plan outcomes to plan a bespoke curriculum for learners with high needs that enables learners to develop their independence and the skills they need for work and adult life.
- In a minority of apprenticeship programmes, teachers should improve their sequencing of the curriculum to ensure apprentices develop basic knowledge before learning more-complex topics.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130446
Address	Park Road Uxbridge UB8 1NQ
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Website	www.hcuc.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Darrell DeSouza
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	The Skills Network Swiss Time Services Limited Pathways London Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy CEO and principal Uxbridge college, 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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