

# Inspection of Nelson and Colne College Group

Inspection dates: 15 to 18 March 2022

## Overall effectiveness

## Outstanding

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>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Nelson and Colne College Group was formed in December 2018 following a merger between Nelson and Colne College and Accrington and Rossendale College. The college consists of two main sites in Lancashire. Nelson and Colne College is the largest and most learners at this site are aged 16 to 18. Accrington and Rossendale College provides training to adults and 16- to 18-year-old learners. Over two thirds of adult learners study in community venues at Lancashire Adult Learning.

Nelson and Colne College Group offers sixth form provision, adult learning, apprenticeships, and programmes for learners who have high needs. At the time of the inspection, the college provided education programmes for 2,265 young people who study A levels, and vocational programmes from entry level to level 3. Over half of the 2,567 adult learners study English, mathematics, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Most of the college's 796 apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships. Most study in health and care or construction. The college subcontracts to three providers who provide training for 61 learners and apprentices. There are 93 learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding. The college offers courses in most subject areas.

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

Learners and apprentices embody the outstanding culture of high standards across all of the college sites. They are passionate and highly motivated about their education and futures. Learners' and apprentices' behaviours mirror the extremely high expectations set by governors, leaders, teachers, and staff.

Learners and apprentices love being learners at the college. They describe their teachers and trainers as inspirational and knowledgeable. Teachers and trainers create highly supportive, calm learning environments in which learners and most apprentices thrive. Learners rapidly build their confidence and produce work of a very high standard. Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

Learners aged 16 to 18 make excellent progress on their programmes. They speak positively about the support they get for their next steps. A-level learners gain significant knowledge and experience through attendance at the college's pre-professional programmes in medicine and health related careers, teaching, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics related courses. During the pandemic, 'aspiring medics club' members undertook a virtual work placement with the local NHS health trust.

Adult learners benefit enormously from an ambitious curriculum that targets the most disadvantaged learners locally. They develop their subject knowledge and build resilience and motivation. Learners studying family learning courses gain confidence on their programmes. They move closer towards employment as teaching assistants in primary schools.

Learners with high needs have high aspirations. They make significant progress from their starting points. Learners successfully develop the knowledge and skills they need for the world of work and to become active citizens in their community. Managers reduce the support for learners gradually over time. This is highly effective in helping learners to develop and maintain greater independence in preparation for their next steps, such as learning to travel independently.

Most apprentices make good progress on their programme. They are rightly proud of the knowledge they develop, including their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices appreciate the additional training they receive beyond their apprenticeship. For example, teaching assistant apprentices use the extra skills they learn in sterilising feeding tubes to better support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in their care. They appreciate going home each day feeling that they have made a difference.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have any concerns. They talk coherently about their understanding of sexual harm, healthy relationships and staying safe online. Learners and apprentices understand the risks posed by extremist behaviour. They explain how people can be radicalised and the signs to look out for in others.

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

Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and governors are very ambitious for their learners and apprentices. They set high expectations for all staff and learners to achieve. They provide a high-quality education through which learners and most apprentices achieve their full potential. Learners and apprentices who study at the college do exceptionally well.

Leaders have excellent links with local employers, universities, and regional business groups, including the local enterprise partnership. They collaborate with them to create a challenging curriculum designed to help learners and apprentices achieve ambitious career goals. Leaders have a clear strategy for the curriculum they provide with the development of English and mathematical skills at its heart. Learners on law, justice and protective services programmes improve their academic writing and learn how to reference correctly. They practise their mathematics skills while calculating crime ratios.

Leaders have ensured that the merger of the two colleges has been very successful. Staff at all levels across college sites have high aspirations for their learners and apprentices. They reflect the high standards and inclusive values set by leaders. Staff are immensely proud to work at the college. Learners and apprentices are equally proud to study at the college. They swiftly develop the traits and commitment they need to be successful on their programmes. Their behaviour is exemplary. Learners and apprentices arrive to lessons on time and are prepared very well for learning.

Teachers and trainers are highly qualified professionals and experts in their fields. They keep up to date with the subjects they teach, for example, through industry updating and as external examiners. Teachers and trainers hone their craft of teaching through attendance at the college's 'Be Phenomenal' staff development programme.

Teachers and trainers use questioning skilfully to develop learners' and apprentices' fluency and consistency of key concepts. They check learners' and apprentices' understanding before moving on to the next topic. Teachers intervene expertly when learners are struggling. Learners, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND and high needs, and apprentices know more and remember more as a result.

Leaders and managers plan an ambitious curriculum for learners and apprentices. They sequence the curriculum logically, building effectively on earlier learning. Learners swiftly deepen their understanding of important content. On light vehicle maintenance programmes learners study health and safety first. They move on to more complex topics, such as diagnosing engine faults and mechanical repairs. Learners become competent in detecting and analysing faults in light vehicles. Managers work with employers to agree the content and order of the apprenticeship

curriculum. Most apprentices make good progress on their programme. For example, at work, brickwork apprentices use their knowledge of health and safety and the correct use of tools every day. They perfect their brickwork technique laying basic corners before they progress on to building archways and decorative walls. Leaders rightly recognise that they need to better coordinate on- and off-the-job training, so that all apprentices make rapid progress on their apprenticeship.

Teachers provide highly effective feedback that enables learners to improve their work rapidly over time. Learners on access to higher education programmes increasingly include more highly technical vocabulary in their assignments. They learn to convey key points more concisely and informatively. Trainers provide useful oral feedback that helps apprentices make good progress in developing their practical skills. However, written feedback to a few apprentices is at times cursory and unhelpful in identifying improvements to written work.

Learners and apprentices value highly the personalised support they receive that helps them to develop their learning. Teachers and trainers use the information they gather from learners' and apprentices' assessments that they complete at the start of their learning to identify any support needs. Learners and apprentices access a range of support throughout their programme including workshops, intervention sessions, one-to-one support, and communication with teachers online. Leaders collaborate with other agencies to ensure that they provide effective wraparound support for learners who need it. They use the funding for learners with high needs, so that these learners make significant progress on their programmes.

Learners and apprentices develop their confidence, self-esteem, resilience, and independence through attendance at personal development activities. They enter national awards and take part in competitions. Learners value the opportunity to work with police officers to deliver cyber bullying and harassment presentations to pupils in high schools. They appreciate the wide range of new experiences on offer, such as paddle boarding, abseiling, and rock climbing. Learners enjoy taking part in a range of community activities, doing voluntary work and charity events. They work in soup kitchens for the homeless and send cards of kindness to support lonely adults in the community.

Learners and apprentices receive high-quality careers advice and guidance that prepares them extremely well for their next steps. Learners attend the 'career zone' where they access helpful information that is individualised to their needs. Managers have adapted the careers resources, so that learners whose first language is not English can access information and guidance. Teachers support adult learners to complete application forms and CVs in preparation for employment. A-level learners develop their interview techniques through mock interviews with industry professionals. They visit regional and national universities. Young people understand the range of opportunities open to them for employment, apprenticeships, and further study. Learners with high needs benefit greatly from highly effective transitional arrangements, which ensures they enrol on the best course to meet their individual career goals. Many apprentices progress on to further study, such as degrees in teacher training.

Most learners on advanced-level programmes progress into higher education, with a significant number going to prestigious universities. Learners and apprentices have especially high levels of achievement, including in English and mathematics subjects. A high proportion of advanced-level learners and apprentices achieve high grades on their course.

Leaders have built very strong and highly effective relationships with subcontractors. The curriculum that subcontractors deliver meets local needs exceptionally well, for example, reducing the number of young people and adults who are not in education, employment, or training in Lancashire. Learners and apprentices make good progress developing new skills and knowledge. A very high proportion of them progress into further study, volunteering or employment.

Leaders and governors promote especially high standards in all aspects of the college. A culture of relentless self-improvement and continual development permeates the college. Leaders correctly identified inconsistencies in the quality of education and the progress apprentices were making on different apprenticeships. They quickly put in place a rigorous improvement plan, which leaders and governors monitor frequently. The actions taken are securing improvements. More apprentices remain on their course and around half achieve high grades on their final assessments. The number of apprentices who do not achieve by their planned date has decreased significantly. Leaders are focused on rapidly improving the quality of education in business administration, children and young people, and construction apprenticeships.

Governors have very high aspirations for their learners, apprentices, and staff. They consistently hold 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. Governors drive the strategic direction of the college. They place a high priority on ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of the local community and employers in the region. Leaders introduced an online curriculum to develop adults' digital skills related to healthcare. The courses teach learners skills such as how to access online outpatient services and how to make appointments with their doctor online.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors, leaders, and managers place a high priority on the safeguarding and well-being of learners and apprentices. The safeguarding team maintain well-developed links with external agencies. They keep up to date with localised safeguarding issues.

Leaders and managers carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work at the college. Staff benefit from regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Teachers and trainers attend training on aspects such as sexual

consent, peer on peer abuse and mental health awareness. Staff know how to keep learners and apprentices safe. They quickly report any concerns they may have.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130738
<b>Address</b>	Scotland Road Nelson Lancashire BB9 7YT
<b>Contact number</b>	01282440200
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.nelson.ac.uk">www.nelson.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Amanda Melton CBE
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority North Lancs Training Group Risual Limited

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy 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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