

Inspection of Green Labyrinth

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Green Labyrinth is based in Swindon and is owned by the NPTC group of colleges (NPTC). Adult learners, who account for nearly half of the funded provision, are taught in fitness centres in the north-east of England or at a beauty therapies centre in Swindon away from its main site. Nearly all 211 adult learners are enrolled on short courses that prepare them for employment.

Fifty-six learners aged 16 to 18 study on levels 1 and 2 courses in Swindon. Most of these learners have few qualifications and face many social and personal barriers to learning. These courses aim to prepare these learners for employment or further education. Twenty learners who have high needs also study on these courses.

Twenty-two apprentices, most of whom are based in the local area, study on a range of apprenticeships. Most of these apprenticeships are in business and information and communication technology (ICT), from levels 2 to 4.

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

The quality of education that learners experience varies too much depending on the programme they are following. Adult learners do well, whereas learners aged 16 to 18, learners who have high needs and apprentices do not have a similarly good experience.

Adult learners are well prepared for their careers in the beauty or fitness industries. They learn how to meet the expectations of their clients and how to treat or train them at the standards expected by the industry. Effective teaching enables a high proportion of them to achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales.

Learners aged 16 to 18, including those who have high needs, study a curriculum that does not prepare them well enough for their next steps in education or work. Many learners studying personal development and employability at entry level to level two have been studying with the provider for over two years but have not made the progress they need to move on to their next step. Learners who have high needs do not all attend useful work placements or meaningful volunteering activities. They do not develop well enough the skills they need to live independently, such as cooking healthy meals or being able to manage their money.

Apprentices studying business receive regular feedback from their trainers which helps them to know how to improve their skills and knowledge and make the expected progress. However, apprentices studying ICT have gaps in what they need to know to prepare them for their future careers. This is because leaders do not plan their training well enough or ensure that trainers have sufficient expertise. For example, managers expect ICT apprentices to learn too much from each other, rather than through well-structured training and instruction from well-qualified trainers.

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

Leaders from NPTC have not taken swift and effective action to improve the quality of leadership and education at Green Labyrinth, and some of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection remain. Although leaders have appointed learning mentors who provide learners aged 16 to 18 with effective pastoral support, they have only recently appointed a specialist to support learners who have high needs.

Leaders from NPTC appointed new leaders of Green Labyrinth in late 2021. While the new leaders have concentrated on planning and implementing a new curriculum for September 2022, they have not ensured that this year's learners who have high needs and those aged 16 to 18 are experiencing a good quality of education. Leaders have not carried out a thorough enough assessment of the quality of all the provision types and do not have sufficiently detailed knowledge to form a useful action plan for improving quality. For example, leaders have not identified actions for the current year to deal with the extremely low qualification achievement of learners

aged 16 to 18 studying English and mathematics functional skills. However, subject leaders of the adult provision have maintained a good quality of education for adults studying beauty therapy and fitness programmes.

While adults gain valuable work experience during their studies, this is not true for everyone. Some learners aged 16 to 18 do not take part in purposeful work experience that is an integral part of their course. It is often not challenging or ambitious enough. Teachers do not assess the skills that learners develop through their work experience. As a result, learners do not always understand what skills they have developed that will help them in the future. Most learners are not ready to start work at the end of their course. Leaders do not provide the small number of learners with learning difficulties/special educational needs who are on a supported internship with work experience, or contact with employers, which is a requirement of their course.

Leaders' use of assessment is not effective. They do not find out what learners aged 16 to 18 already know and can do when they start their courses. Therefore, leaders do not have the information they need to build a curriculum that fills the gaps in these learners' knowledge resulting from the fragmented education that many have previously experienced. As a result, many learners aged 16 to 18, including those with learning difficulties/special educational needs, do not learn enough new skills and knowledge to help them move on to a higher-level course or into employment.

Teachers do not always help learners aged 16 to 18 to significantly improve the personal skills, such as communication and resilience, that they need to better improve their chances of moving on to their next stage. Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the expertise to meet the needs of learners who have significant learning needs. Learners with high needs do not receive the specific specialist support to which they are entitled. However, apprentices are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their studies. They value the relationship with their assessors and trainers who support and help them to make the expected progress in their learning.

The subject leaders of adult programmes ensure that learners are equipped well with the behaviours they need to progress into careers in the beauty therapy or fitness industries. Adults are enthusiastic and passionate about their courses. They increase in confidence and have good attitudes towards their learning. They recognise the importance and value of the new skills that they learn for later employment.

Managers do not take sufficient action to improve the attendance of learners aged 16 to 18, many of whom have significant barriers to their learning. They focus too much on dealing with learners' absences rather than helping learners to develop strategies to improve their low levels of attendance.

Leaders do not provide apprentices and learners aged 16 to 18 with independent careers information, advice and guidance. Too many do not understand fully the opportunities available to them when they complete their apprenticeship or course. However, adults are supported well by their tutors and gain an appropriate

understanding of the next steps into employment or further study.

Leaders do not ensure that apprentices on ICT programmes are taught well enough. They do not ensure that all apprentices develop enough substantial new vocational knowledge. This is because leaders have not ensured that they have trainers that have the knowledge and skills needed to be able to teach all the ICT programme content. As a result, apprentices on ICT programmes rely too heavily on learning in their own workplace or from their peers. However, most trainers teach apprentices English and mathematics knowledge effectively. Consequently, they develop further their skills and pass their assessments early into their apprenticeship.

Leaders have reviewed the range of apprenticeships they offer well and have focused on industries that are important to the local economy in Swindon. They involve employers in designing the content of the apprenticeships so that the curriculum contains topics that are of value to the local economy. For example, an employer specialising in recycling ICT equipment helped design a curriculum that contains learning on installing equipment and software on communications technology.

Teachers prepare adult learners well to take advantage of jobs available in their local area in the beauty therapy or fitness industries. Teachers use their industry expertise well to teach learners technical skills before moving on to applying these when working with clients. For example, learners studying fitness learn how free weights can be combined with fixed-weight machines to create an exercise programme specifically tailored to a client. As well as becoming competent practitioners, a very high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications.

Leaders have successfully gained the support of staff for the planned changes to the curriculums for September 2022. Staff are enthusiastic and keen to do the best job they can for their learners.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff responsible for safeguarding are appropriately trained. They have established strong links with external agencies that they use well to support learners with safeguarding concerns. Leaders record any concerns about their learner's safety and welfare, and safeguarding staff deal swiftly and effectively with incidents.

Learners feel safe and cared for by staff. Staff deal effectively with concerns that learners raise and help them to develop a wider understanding of safeguarding concerns. Adult learners understand how to keep themselves and their clients safe in beauty salons and fitness studios.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders at NPTC must rectify the shortfalls in the quality of education and training for learners who have high needs and those aged 16 to 18. They must monitor the quality of provision more rigorously and hold Green Labyrinth leaders and managers to account for the actions taken and their impact on learners.
- Leaders must implement a curriculum that meets the needs of learners aged 16 to 18 and learners who have high needs so that they make the progress expected of them from clearly identified starting points and are prepared well to progress to employment or further education.
- Leaders must provide learners aged 16 to 18 with high-quality, challenging and ambitious work placements.
- Leaders must provide learners aged 16 to 18 and apprentices with independent careers advice and guidance.
- Leaders must ensure that learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support. They must ensure that all learners who have high needs receive the specialist support to which they are entitled.
- Leaders must ensure that staff are well trained. Trainers must have the knowledge and skills to teach the content of the apprenticeship curriculum effectively. Learning support assistants must have the knowledge and skills needed to be able to help learners aged 16 to 18 make swift progress.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that all apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours because of well-taught training that is closely aligned to the jobs they do at work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59222
Address	1 Milton Road Swindon Wiltshire SN1 5JE
Contact number	01793 236245
Website	www.greenlabyrinth.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Darryn Hedges
Provider type	Independent training provider
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 November 2019
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior manager quality and compliance, 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 observing 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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