

Inspection of Trafford College Group

Inspection dates: 8 to 11 November 2022

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	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Trafford College Group (TCG) was formed in April 2018 following a merger between Stockport College and Trafford College. In May 2021, TCG merged with Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College. TCG has five main campuses across the boroughs of Trafford and Stockport.

TCG offers education programmes for young people, adult learning, apprenticeships and programmes for learners with high needs. At the time of the inspection, TCG provided education programmes for 5,032 young people who study A levels and vocational programmes from entry level to level 3. There were 1,845 adult learners, of which most study English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Most of TCG's 800 apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships, with the highest enrolments in health and care, engineering or construction. There are 161 learners for whom TCG receive high-needs funding. TCG subcontracts to four providers who provide training for 308 learners aged 16 to 19.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy learning at TCG. They talk about the highly inclusive and supportive environment that provides a safe and positive place to learn. They behave respectfully in class, displaying positive attitudes towards each other. Learners celebrate cultural differences and say that they are proud to represent the college in the community.

Most learners are motivated to learn and attend their classes. They feel very well supported by their teachers and mentors. Adult learners develop their confidence and resilience as a result of the support they receive, progressing to higher-level study or employment. However, attendance on a minority of courses for young people is too low.

Learners participate in voluntary work or take part in local community events. They work with charities aimed at combatting the loneliness of elderly people to provide 'welcome Wednesday' activities. Computing learners help people from the community identify online scams and provide workshops on how to stay safe online. Learners develop their communication skills which prepare them well for their next steps.

Apprentices and learners improve their confidence and employability skills as a result of taking part in work-related activities. Learners on the supported internship course benefit from attending work placements that match their skills. They carry out specific tasks that link to their future aspirations. Most learners with high needs on the support internship programme progress into paid employment.

Learners receive useful information in tutorial lessons on how to improve their health and well-being. They learn how to recognise symptoms of stress and the importance of sleep and a healthy diet. Learners develop their health and fitness through a range of activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and 'get active' programmes. They develop their teamwork skills and increase their understanding of the links between physical and mental health and well-being.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They follow safe working practices when completing practical work such as wearing the correct personal and protective equipment and using machinery and tools safely. In tutorial lessons, learners discuss a range of topics such as healthy relationships, mental health and well-being and staying safe online. Learners feel comfortable to talk to staff and say they receive the support they need when they seek help.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work with employers and other relevant stakeholders effectively. They understand local and regional skills needs well and use this information to plan the courses they offer. This helps to ensure learners develop specific skills to move into

employment where there are skills shortages. For example, leaders have developed the 'airport academy' to provide pre-employment training for a range of roles including security, airside, retail and hospitality for the aviation industry.

Leaders have developed effective relationships with local education providers. As part of the Greater Manchester colleges group, they plan provision to meet the needs of the local areas and communities that they serve. Leaders have developed useful partnerships with a range of universities. They make sure the A-level curriculum prepares learners well for moving into higher education. Learners benefit from using university facilities to develop their research skills and attend mock interviews to prepare them for university interviews.

Leaders make effective use of advice provided by employer representative boards to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of employers. Leaders have developed access to higher education (HE) courses to target recruitment gaps in biomedical science. Leaders include domestic retrofit qualifications to provide learners with the skills they need to move on to careers in construction. Leaders are developing a 'green skills' academy to provide training for qualified electricians to fit electric car charging points.

Leaders do not ensure that all apprentices benefit from well-planned training that meets employers' needs. Too many employers are not aware of the topics apprentices will be studying or the skills they are developing. As a result, most apprentices do not routinely practise the skills employers require soon enough after they have learned them at college.

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

Leaders plan an ambitious curriculum for most learners and apprentices. They plan training to enable apprentices and learners to incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Business learners learn about marketing and finance. They apply this knowledge effectively when creating a business plan for a start-up business.

Leaders design training to prepare learners and apprentices for their next steps into further learning or employment. They use destination information and future career aspirations of learners to alter the curriculum. For example, A-level psychology tutors include topics related to forensic psychology. Learners access wider degree opportunities in related subjects such as criminology. Team leader apprentices develop budgeting skills to prepare them for future management roles.

Leaders have developed an effective curriculum that meets the needs of most learners with high needs. Learners benefit from highly individualised programmes in vocational and technical subject areas. They develop high-level vocational and technical skills which prepare them well for further learning or employment. Staff provide learners with individual support and use a variety of strategies to enable learners to remain in class such as time-out cards and the use of breathing

techniques to reduce their anxiety. As a result, learners improve attendance and achieve well. However, staff have not designed an ambitious curriculum for a few learners with high needs on the 'choices' course. There is insufficient focus on the aspirations of learners to enable progression to vocational courses or supported work.

Staff are appropriately qualified and have relevant industry knowledge. They benefit from regular training to develop their teaching skills and subject expertise. This enables staff to use relevant examples in their teaching to illustrate key learning points. Teachers in electrical installation use their industry knowledge of ingress protection ratings for electrical fittings to develop apprentices' understanding of safety in domestic settings. Apprentices are able to explain ingress protection ratings and identify if fittings are appropriate in the workplace.

Most teachers use the results of learners' assessments at the start of the course to plan their teaching effectively. Sports learners complete practical exercises so that teachers can assess their skills before assigning them to classes. However, apprenticeship assessors do not routinely collect or use information about what apprentices know and can do at the start of their apprenticeship. Most apprentices follow the same curriculum regardless of previous knowledge and experience.

Most teachers provide frequent opportunities for learners to practise and develop their skills through discussion and group activities. For example, access to higher education learners make plasticine models of the nervous system within the heart to demonstrate how a pacemaker works. This helps them to understand key concepts through visual aids. ESOL learners develop their speaking skills to confidently take orders from customers in a local takeaway in their part-time work.

Teachers use assessments effectively to check and consolidate learning. A-level biology tutors complete follow-up activities to improve technical language such as case studies and exam questions. As a result, learners are able to remember and recall scientific terminology in future learning. They increasingly improve their technical vocabulary in their written work.

Most teachers and assessors provide useful feedback to learners and apprentices that is personalised to their needs. ESOL learners are directed to listen to radio programmes and complete further reading. Carpentry and joinery learners learn how to improve their cutting techniques.

Most assessors do not routinely coordinate on- and off-the-job training with employers. This results in apprentices being unable to reinforce learning in the workplace in a timely manner. Assessors do not routinely involve employers in the reviews of apprentices' progress. Employers do not know the progress their apprentices are making, or how to support them effectively in the workplace.

Apprentices and learners receive effective careers advice and guidance relevant to their career aspirations. Learners speak highly about the personal careers advice they receive. For example, access to HE nursing and midwifery learners receive

useful information from careers advisers on the wider career paths available to them such as occupational health. Media learners attend conferences where they speak with industry experts. They explore a range of roles within the sector to inform their next steps.

Leaders have a clear oversight of the subcontracted provision. They meet regularly with subcontractor staff to discuss learners' progress. Staff at the subcontractors feel supported by leaders at TCG. They access a range of training such as safeguarding updates and development of teaching skills to improve their practice. As a result, learners at the subcontractors achieve as well as those at TCG.

Leaders recognise that there is too much inconsistency in the quality of education for apprentices. Leaders have implemented a range of quality assurance techniques to monitor and improve the quality of education that apprentices receive. Managers use the results from these processes to identify targeted actions for improvement. Clear development plans are in place to support swift improvements. The number of apprentices that have not completed their apprenticeships on time is reducing quickly.

Governors are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their roles. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement. They receive useful reports that enable them to provide support and challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account. For example, governors have supported senior leaders to pause recruitment on a range of apprenticeship standards to improve the quality of education that apprentices receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed safeguarding policies and procedures that are implemented effectively across TCG. The designated safeguarding lead and their deputies are appropriately trained and qualified to carry out their roles. They record and monitor safeguarding concerns swiftly. Staff use their links to external agencies effectively to refer learners and apprentices to appropriate support.

Staff receive regular training on a range of topics such as suicide intervention, signs of exploitation and exploring stigma. Staff know how to keep learners and apprentices safe and report any concerns they may have. Leaders are introducing a 'trauma-informed approach' to behaviour management to better support their learners and apprentices.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that employers are routinely involved in the planning of on- and off-the-job training and reviews of their apprentices to support apprentices to make the progress of which they are capable.

- Leaders should identify what apprentices already know and can do at the start of their programme and use this information to ensure they plan a challenging and individualised curriculum.
- Leaders should review the curriculum for learners with high needs on the 'choices' programme to ensure it is challenging and prepares them for future learning or work.
- Leaders should ensure that they put appropriate actions in place to ensure learners with low attendance attend college regularly.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130519
Address	Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0XH
Contact number	01618867045
Website	www.trafford.ac.uk
Principal	James Scott
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Flixton Girls School Stockport County 2010 Limited Carrington Riding Centre Limited Debut Academy of Performing Arts

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, 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 students’ work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider’s documentation and records.

Inspection team

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