

Inspection of Coventry College

Inspection dates: 15 to 18 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Coventry College is a large general further education college based in Coventry. The college was formed in August 2017 from the merger of City College and Coventry and Henley College. The college provides vocational, technical and professional education and training to learners of all ages, from entry level to higher education.

At the time of the inspection, there were 5,099 learners studying at the college. Of these, 2,744 learners study on education programmes for young people. Most of these learners study at level 3. There were 2,096 learners enrolled on adult learning programmes, with the majority of these studying at level 1 or below. There were 251 apprentices studying mainly standards-based apprenticeships and 85 learners in receipt of high-needs funding. Most apprentices are over the age of 19.

Leaders at the college work with one subcontractor, who provides training for 37 learners. All learners are enrolled on level 3 sports coaching and development programmes.

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

Learners enjoy being part of the college community. They feel respected and embrace everyone's individuality. Learners feel safe and comfortable at college. They know that instances of bullying and harassment are not tolerated.

Learners are enthusiastic about their learning and are keen to do well. Teachers and staff support those who experience challenges effectively and help learners to develop their resilience while studying at the college. Staff encourage learners to think positively about their futures. As a result, the majority of learners are motivated to succeed.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of learners. As a result, most learners are professional and well behaved while in common areas of the college. In lessons, most learners are calm, attentive, polite and ready to learn.

Learners with high needs enjoy social interactions and feel part of the college. They value the professional relationships they develop with their teachers and support workers. They enjoy developing new friendships with their peers. Learners with high needs are confident that college staff would take prompt action should they have any concerns. They feel that the college is a safe environment to learn.

Learners on study programmes undertake learning in mental health and well-being. They learn how to establish healthy relationships and stay healthy. However, apprentices and adult learners have little opportunity to develop their skills beyond the curriculum that they study. They do not engage in learning that helps them to develop knowledge in areas such as how to stay physically healthy.

Apprentices do not receive high-quality teaching that helps them to improve. Too many apprentices do not receive the training that they need to be successful.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a limited contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders proactively engage with the West Midlands Combined Authority, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Chamber of Commerce and local colleges and universities to identify the skills needs of the Coventry and Warwickshire region. They support the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP to understand some of the challenges that young people have experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic began. They engage in many projects and work with partners to provide opportunities that increase the accessibility of skills training for learners and apprentices across the region.

Leaders and managers do not sufficiently involve employers in the design of the curriculum. Leaders meet with a few employers to understand their needs. However, these meetings are not yet fully established in most curriculum areas. As a result,

the curriculum is yet to be developed to ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and skills they need for future employment.

Leaders and managers understand their role in contributing to local skills needs. They have invested in facilities and upskilled their staff in the construction, green energy, battery, electrification and digital e-sports sectors. However, most of these curriculums have not been fully developed. Learners are yet to be enrolled on these courses.

Leaders do not fully evaluate the success of the curriculum. Managers do not systematically check the effectiveness of the curriculum. They do not know if learners and apprentices learn the skills they need to be successful.

Governors recognise that they need to have a greater focus on developing the skills offer of the college to meet the specific sector requirements, both regionally and nationally. They have recently placed more emphasis on engaging employers to co-develop curriculum. However, this has not yet led to employers becoming sufficiently involved with the design of the curriculum. They are acutely aware of the investment that is required and the infrastructure that is needed to maintain and enhance facilities and resources at the college in order to meet identified skills priorities.

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

Leaders work closely with the local universities to inform the design of the science curriculum. Science teachers develop a curriculum that meets the needs of learners to progress to university to study undergraduate degrees in science and medical specialisms. For example, they teach medical physics and forensics. This knowledge helps learners to progress to pharmacy and forensic-related undergraduate degree courses.

Teachers' feedback on learners' work is inconsistent. Where teachers provide effective feedback, such as fashion and foundation learning, learners receive feedback that helps them to improve. However, for many other learners and apprentices, feedback is not developmental and is often of a poor standard. Learners and apprentices are not clear about what they have done well or what they need to do to improve. As a result, learners and apprentices do not achieve the results of which they are capable.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that learners and apprentices routinely receive high-quality teaching. In a few areas, leaders have struggled to recruit teachers and needed to recruit temporary staff as an interim solution. However, leaders have not placed enough focus on supporting these teachers to improve their teaching practice. For example, in construction, teachers do not know learners' starting points. They do not understand learners' needs or fully understand the expectations of the curriculum. This has resulted in poor teaching that has impeded learners' progress.

Most managers of study programmes plan learning effectively. They build the curriculum to be more challenging over time. For example, level 3 fashion learners develop craft skills during the first term. They then progress to more-complex skills, such as pattern cutting. E-sports learners secure skills in photoshop essentials and research. This prepares learners for later work on topics such as game design. As a result, learners acquire knowledge and skills that help them to progress.

Most study programme teachers explain difficult concepts and present information clearly. For example, teachers in e-sports explain the physics of game design. They ensure learners think about gravity, buoyancy and elasticity. Teachers in biology explain complex ideas with clarity. They use an effective range of diagrams and examples to support their teaching. However, this is not the case across all subjects. In physics, checking learners' understanding is not effective and questioning is often superficial. As a result, learners fail to understand basic concepts.

The majority of learners on study programmes are well prepared for their next stage in education. A high number of science and fashion learners secure university places. Most learners in health and social care and foundation learning courses progress to the next level of study. However, achievements for GCSE and functional skills in English and mathematics are too low.

Leaders and managers of adult level 3 health and social care have not designed an effective curriculum. The curriculum is overly ambitious and requires too much independent learning. In too many cases, the work placement element is missing or left to the end. This means that learners are not able to develop a deeper understanding of their sector, practise what they have learned in a workplace setting and consolidate their learning.

Teachers on adult courses use a range of effective teaching strategies. In level 3 hairdressing, they include theory in practical sessions. They use extensive questioning and self-reflection. Teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) break down difficult concepts. For example, they use phonics to break down words that sound similar. These words are then built upon to become increasingly complex. This results in learners developing knowledge over time.

Too few adult learners in health and social care pass the controlled assessment in the first year. As a result, a number of learners did not pass their course and could not progress to the second year. For ESOL and level 3 hairdressing, where the curriculum was better planned, pass rates were higher. More learners in these areas progress on to further programs of study.

Leaders and managers have not developed a curriculum that meets apprentices' individual needs. They do not use information gathered at the start of the apprenticeship to identify any gaps in learning. They do not make learning relevant to the workplace. For example, apprentices in carpentry receive teaching in skills they have already mastered. This results in apprentices feeling demotivated. Consequently, they make slow progress on their apprenticeship.

Teachers and assessors do not plan and sequence learning for apprentices effectively. They do not coordinate on- and off-the-job training with employers. This results in apprentices not having the opportunity to practise the new knowledge and skills they have developed in the workplace.

Teachers and assessors have not put in place a challenging or ambitious curriculum for apprentices. Most apprentices and employers are aware of the requirements of the end-point-assessment. They know and understand the assessment methods and what grades are available. However, learning goals are often completion dates for generically set course assignments. Teachers do not use assessments of learning to set challenging or inspirational targets for apprentices to achieve. Consequently, apprentices do not achieve their potential.

Managers and staff identify learners' additional support needs and provide appropriate support. They link with external specialist support services. The local sensory team provides effective support for a small number of learners with a visual or hearing impairment. Managers ensure that learners have access to resources so that they can make swift progress in their studies, such as providing specially adapted laptops. This enables learners to be more independent in their studies.

Managers have not designed a sufficiently ambitious curriculum for learners with high needs. The curriculum comprises of qualification units across a series of vocational pathways. Teachers do not use the information about learners' specific requirements as detailed in learners' education, health and care plans to develop a curriculum that meets their individual needs.

Managers have not made sure that learners' support plans reflect the wider needs of learners in receipt of high-needs funding. For example, wider personal and social development, such as making friends, is not part of these plans. These plans focus solely on teaching and learning aims of the qualifications they study. As a result, learners show little progress in developing their social skills.

Teachers do not set appropriate targets for learners with high needs. This results in learners not knowing what their targets are. Targets are often too technical and not sufficiently incremental.

Leaders have recently placed an increased focus on improving attendance and punctuality. These new strategies have resulted in learners attending many more of their lessons. Learners in sports, public services, childcare, and health and social care have very high attendance. However, attendance is still low in a few areas of the college.

Most learners benefit from an effective, impartial careers advice and guidance programme. This includes good support for applying to university. As a result, most learners know how to progress to their next steps. However, apprentices and adult learners do not routinely receive impartial careers education and advice. Consequently, they are not aware of the opportunities that are available to them once they have completed their course or apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have created an inclusive environment that promotes equality of opportunity. They set clear expectations for teachers and staff. Teachers help learners to increase their self-esteem and aim higher by celebrating their success. When learners make inappropriate or disparaging comments, teachers challenge them quickly and effectively. As a result, the classroom environment is supportive and collaborative.

Senior leaders are ambitious for the success of the college and its learners. They have rightly focused their efforts on securing financial stability for the college. They have also invested considerable time and effort in improving the quality of education. However, these efforts have not yet yielded sufficient improvements. Quality assurance activities focus too much on compliance and do not improve the experience of the learner or apprentice. They do not place enough emphasis on developing the craft of teaching. As a result, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the college.

Leaders have been too slow to respond to poor performance within apprenticeships. Consequently, too many apprentices do not acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

Leaders and managers understand that the happiness and well-being of staff are important. They take appropriate steps to help staff remain healthy and contented. Leaders have invested in an employee assistance programme for when they need support. They celebrate staff success and show concern and compassion when staff are ill or suffering bereavement.

Governors have considerable knowledge and experience. They use this when challenging and supporting leaders. They receive high-quality information on areas such as safeguarding, curriculum and quality, staff performance and finance. This gives them a helpful insight into the performance of the college.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have a good understanding of their roles. They are appropriately qualified. They are aware of the many learners who live in challenging circumstances and provide them with effective support. They record safeguarding concerns diligently, monitor their progress and swiftly respond to them to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

Managers follow safer recruitment practices. They carry out appropriate pre-employment checks on new staff. Staff undertake mandatory safeguarding training. They supplement this with additional guidance and updates.

Learners receive useful information that helps them to stay safe. They know to whom they should report concerns if necessary. Apprentices have a good

understanding of how to be safe at work. For example, apprentices recognise and use correct personal protective equipment when on site. They undertake learning that makes them aware of potential threats, such as online abuse.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers must quickly respond to the concerns within apprenticeships. They need to make sure that apprentices receive high-quality teaching that is based on their starting points. The curriculum must be ambitious and challenge apprentices to meet their potential. They must coordinate on- and off-the-job learning to ensure apprentices gain the opportunity to practise newly learned skills.
- Leaders should make sure that learners and apprentices benefit from a curriculum that is informed by employers to ensure they have the knowledge and skills that employers require, now and in the future.
- Leaders need to make sure that learners and apprentices consistently receive high-quality teaching. All staff must be given the support they need to improve their teaching practice.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that adult learners and apprentices routinely receive high-quality, unbiased career advice and guidance so that they are aware of the opportunities available to them.
- Leaders and managers need to ensure that the curriculum for adult learners and apprentices goes beyond their immediate qualifications. They should ensure that learners develop confidence, resilience and knowledge so that they can keep themselves mentally and physically healthy and deepen learners' and apprentices' understanding of age-appropriate, healthy relationships.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 130472 |
| Address | 50 Swanswell Street Coventry CV1 5DG |
| Contact number | 02476932932 |
| Website | http://www.coventrycollege.ac.uk/ |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Carol Thomas |
| Provider type | General Further Education College |
| Date of previous inspection | 17 to 20 September 2019 |
| Main subcontractors | Elite Sporting |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal curriculum innovations, quality and performance, 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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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bev Ramsell, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Russ Henry | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Fazal Dad | Ofsted Inspector |
| Helen Kinghorn | Ofsted Inspector |
| Andrew Thompson | Ofsted Inspector |
| Tony Day | Ofsted Inspector |
| Beth Selwood | Ofsted Inspector |
| Karen Green | Ofsted Inspector |
| Rachel Clark | His Majesty's Inspector |
| William Baidoe-Ansah | Ofsted Inspector |
| Christina Christou | Ofsted Inspector |
| Helen Morgan | His Majesty's Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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