

Inspection of Wigan and Leigh College

Inspection dates:

29 November to 2 December 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Wigan and Leigh College is a general further education college in Greater Manchester. There are four main centres, two of which are in Wigan and two in Leigh. Most learners and apprentices study in Wigan. The college offers education programmes for young people, courses for adults, apprenticeships, and programmes for learners with high needs.

At the time of the inspection, the college provided education and training to 2,882 young people. Most study on vocational programmes from entry level to level 3, and a few study A levels. Most of the 1,512 adult learners study on a part-time basis. Most of the 1,303 apprentices follow standards-based apprenticeships, with the remainder on frameworks. There are 181 learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding. The college subcontracts to two providers, who provide training for 107 learners, two-thirds of whom are aged 16 to 18. The college offers courses in most subject areas.

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

Learners and apprentices are happy at college, which they describe as welcoming and supportive. They appreciate the culture of mutual respect and tolerance that their teachers and trainers promote. Learners and apprentices enjoy their courses. They are motivated and have positive attitudes to their learning.

In most curriculum areas, learners aged 16 to 18, including those studying with subcontractors, enjoy an ambitious curriculum. They take pride in their work, and most learners produce work of a high standard. Learners feel well informed about the options they have for their next steps in employment, apprenticeships and further study. They take part in employer projects and attend work-experience placements, where they develop communication skills, teamworking and resilience. In sport, learners coach and officiate at local events to help children become more active.

Adult learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to progress in life, work and further study. They gain in confidence because of their experience at college. Learners on programmes in English for speakers of other languages carry out daily activities in the community, such as making appointments. Access to higher education (HE) teachers prepare learners successfully for their next steps in learning. Learners develop academic writing skills, referencing techniques and confidence in delivering presentations.

Apprentices develop the professional behaviours that they need to be successful at work. They work well with their peers and colleagues and treat others with respect. Apprentices' attendance is high. Level 3 business administration apprentices deal with a range of customer enquiries professionally and competently. Level 2 carpentry and joinery apprentices install new kitchens to a high professional standard. Apprentices develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout their apprenticeship, which their employers value.

Most learners with high needs take part in high-quality programmes that enable them to achieve their education, health and care plan outcomes alongside their qualifications. Learners on foundation learning courses benefit from personalised timetables that are built around their social needs. Most learners make good progress on their programmes, which aligns with the progress that all other learners make. Vocational learners studying catering work competently and confidently in front-of-house and kitchen roles.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have any concerns. They benefit from attending training, including a puppet show, where they learn about the risks and tell-tale signs of cyber bullying and sexual abuse. As part of their sociology curriculum, A-level learners study families and functionalist beliefs. They use their learning in day-to-day encounters, such as challenging sexist beliefs. Learners and apprentices follow appropriate health and safety measures when carrying out practical tasks. However, most apprentices do not have an appropriate

understanding of radicalisation and extremism and how it applies to them while at work or in their personal lives.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work closely with stakeholders to identify accurately the priority skills required in the local area. These include construction, engineering, food manufacturing and healthcare. Leaders develop bespoke programmes to meet the needs of employers, also benefitting the community. For example, they provide a traineeship programme for care leavers in partnership with the local authority and an international food manufacturing company. This helps care leavers to enter the job market and gain qualifications and experience to support their next steps.

Leaders work very effectively with the local authority and other stakeholders, such as the police, voluntary organisations and local schools, to develop 'community wealth building'. This project is designed to encourage employment, training opportunities and improved housing and lifestyles for Wigan residents. Leaders and managers know their locality and its skills needs exceptionally well. They support the local vision to 'keep the pound in Wigan' through their offer of training and collaboration with stakeholders. For example, leaders developed the health and social care sector-based work academy programme with key partners. Local residents train in healthcare, which helps them to gain employment in care settings and care for other Wigan residents.

Leaders collaborate highly effectively with employers to develop tailored training and education programmes. They use the expertise of employers to inform each curriculum. For example, they work with electricity suppliers to provide power network craftsperson apprenticeships. This includes additional training on the safe use of hand tools, operation of mobile elevated working platforms and first aid to meet the specific skill requirements of employers. In computing, they work with games console designers to include up-to-date development kits and equipment so that the curriculum aligns closely to modern gaming specifications. Employers are highly complimentary about the quality of provision at the college and the proactive approach to meeting the needs of their businesses.

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

Leaders, managers and governors ensure that most learners and apprentices benefit from a high-quality education and an ambitious curriculum. They work closely with key stakeholders to map a curriculum offer that meets local and regional needs and supports learners and apprentices to progress on to their next steps. Young people who study level 3 health and social care learn about topics such as mental health nursing. This helps them to progress into specialist nursing roles.

Leaders have a clear rationale for their subcontracted provision. They use the expertise of subcontractors to provide a curriculum that meets learner needs. For example, leaders at one subcontractor develop a curriculum that prepares hard-to-reach young people to move into further education or employment. College leaders have taken appropriate steps to manage the performance of this provision and remove subcontracted provision where it does not meet expectations and standards.

Teachers and trainers have the appropriate industry expertise and teaching qualifications to teach learners and apprentices. They maintain competence in their specialisms through industry updates. For example, beauty therapy teachers attend courses in body art painting. Teachers and trainers benefit from the bitesize training they attend to inform their teaching practice. They use the skills they develop, such as effective feedback and assessment techniques, successfully in the classroom. In health and social care, teachers use voiceovers to provide useful feedback to learners.

Teachers and trainers plan curriculums that are sequenced in a logical order and build effectively on earlier learning. Level 2 carpentry and joinery apprentices start their apprenticeship by learning about health and safety. They learn how to apply these practices while working with electrical cutting equipment. They then move on to using power tools. Most learners and apprentices can recall their previous learning. Level 2 creative arts learners begin by learning about colour theories, which they use later in their programme when working on a pop-art project.

Most teachers and trainers create positive learning environments in which learners and apprentices participate confidently. Staff know their learners and apprentices well. Catering learners with high needs follow a recipe card when making a yule log. They listen attentively when the teacher provides staggered instructions to reinforce each step in the sequence. Level 3 electrical installation apprentices proactively ask questions and seek further clarification from their trainers. Most learners and apprentices are engaged in their learning.

Most teachers and trainers have high expectations of learners and apprentices. They use assessment effectively to reinforce learners' and apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Mathematics teachers use skilful questioning and explanation to encourage adult learners to interrogate data and think about what it is telling them. Nuclear engineering teachers encourage group debate in which apprentices develop a deeper understanding of negative phase angle.

Most teachers and trainers use a range of activities to check learners' and apprentices' knowledge and skills. In computing, teachers use re-cap activities at the beginning of sessions to check learners' knowledge. They use quizzes and mock exam questions to check learners' understanding and identify any gaps in their learning. Most teachers and trainers provide helpful feedback, which learners and apprentices use to improve their work.

Learners and apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills. Learners with high needs tell the time using visually different analogue and digital timepieces.

GCSE English learners confidently describe how to structure a formal letter. They identify each section in sequence and know when to use 'yours sincerely' or 'yours faithfully'.

Teachers and trainers provide effective support for most learners and apprentices with additional learning needs and/or high needs. They are fully aware of individual support needs, and most implement these appropriately. Leaders and managers ensure that learners have the resources they need to participate in their studies. They provide high ratios of support staff and adaptive technology. However, in a very small number of cases, managers do not ensure that learners have suitable therapy plans in place to help them manage their behaviours. A very few learners struggle to manage their emotions independently.

Leaders and teachers promote, and learners and apprentices benefit from, a culture of care and support across the college. They create an open, honest environment, where learners and apprentices feel empowered to raise any concerns that they may have. Staff are proud of the inclusive environment they create in which most learners and apprentices flourish.

Learners benefit from attending a range of enrichment activities. They develop their confidence while attending outdoor pursuits, such as archery and kayaking. Learners with high needs enjoy going on trips and attending clubs. They develop wider skills such as communication and making friends. However, apprentices do not routinely benefit from a personal development curriculum. Most apprentices do not have opportunities to take part in voluntary or community work.

Most learners are well informed about their next steps in education or work. They receive valuable information, advice and guidance about their chosen pathways and potential career opportunities. Young people studying music performance gain insights into their potential future career options. They visit universities, music studios and venues, where they explore the history of music. Adults on access to HE programmes have ambitious progression plans, including studying degrees in evolutionary anthropology and social work. However, apprentices and learners with high needs on foundation learning programmes do not routinely benefit from a well-planned programme of independent careers information, advice and guidance. They do not consistently receive the information they need to be able to make informed, long-term career choices.

Leaders have a clear oversight of the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive. They know their key strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use quality improvement processes to monitor the quality of provision that learners and apprentices receive. For example, they carry out learning walks to monitor the development of teaching skills. They use the information they gather from these processes to put in place targeted interventions for curriculum areas that require further improvement.

Leaders and managers identify that a few programmes do not meet the high standards they expect. Leaders have struggled to recruit staff to teach animal

management. They acknowledge that young people who study level 3 animal management make slower progress than their peers. Leaders have clear actions in place to address the weaknesses they have identified.

Governors have the appropriate expertise to carry out their roles. They have a range of experience across the education, public and private sectors, which they use to challenge senior leaders effectively. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement at the college. They use the range of useful reports they receive to provide effective scrutiny.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding staff are appropriately trained to carry out their roles. Safeguarding leads use the intelligence they gather to inform staff about current issues. Staff benefit from learning about topics such as mental health first aid and suicide ideation. They receive regular safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty updates.

Leaders and managers carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work at the college. Staff follow appropriate procedures when referring safeguarding concerns. The safeguarding team deal with and record safeguarding referrals and well-being concerns swiftly and effectively. They follow appropriate processes when referring concerns to other agencies.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should rapidly improve the few programmes that are underperforming, including level 3 animal management, so that learners and apprentices benefit from an ambitious curriculum and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices and learners with high needs receive independent information, advice and guidance about their chosen pathways and potential career opportunities so that they can make informed, long-term career choices.
- Leaders and managers should plan a personal development curriculum that apprentices can participate in and benefit from.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices develop a good understanding of radicalisation and extremism and how it applies to them while at work and in their personal lives.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130521
Address	PO Box 53 Parson's Walk Wigan Lancashire WN1 1RS
Contact number	01942 761800
Website	www.wigan-leigh.ac.uk
Principal	Anna Dawe
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 November 2016
Main subcontractors	Competence Development Limited Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, curriculum, 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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