

Inspection of Kirklees College

Inspection dates:

28 February to 3 March 2023

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

Kirklees College is a general further education college in West Yorkshire. Its main campus is in Huddersfield, where most of the provision is based. The college also has a campus and a higher skills centre in Dewsbury. There are four other centres in Huddersfield, specialising in animal care, engineering, process manufacturing and construction. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,903 students on education programmes for young people, 4,498 adult students, 1,343 apprentices and 552 students with high needs. The college works with two subcontractors, Staff Power Training Limited and Castleview Ltd, to provide adult learning programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were no students studying on this provision.

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

Students and apprentices enjoy their courses and are keen to learn, showing determination to succeed. They develop their confidence and resilience during their time at college. Most students and apprentices develop skills and behaviours that employers value and which will support them to be successful in life.

Students and apprentices learn in calm, supportive environments. This allows them to develop positive behaviours for success in learning and employment, and they live up to the high expectations set by tutors and staff. In specialist environments, such as process manufacturing, behaviour replicates the level of professionalism expected in industry.

Students and apprentices feel safe in college. They forge positive relationships with their tutors, and most would contact them first if they had concerns. Students appreciate the security in place at the various sites. They know that buildings can only be accessed with the appropriate badge and that security staff are trained to liaise with students and apprentices in a supportive way.

The vast majority of students and apprentices benefit from high-quality teaching, which supports them to progress and achieve. However, on education programmes for young people and adult learning programmes, there are a few pockets of less effective practice. Where this is the case, too many students are not making the progress of which they are capable. Leaders and managers are already taking action to make improvements, although the full impact of this cannot yet be fully seen.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Kirklees College is the only general further education college in the area, offering a broad vocational curriculum to meet local needs. Leaders work effectively with a range of stakeholders to ensure that students and apprentices develop the skills and behaviours to gain and sustain employment. For example, leaders work with local NHS services and Jobcentre Plus to identify staff shortages and skills gaps in the local region. They use this to plan sector work-based academy programmes, which have been successful in supporting adults into employment.

Leaders use the knowledge that they gain from liaison with employers to adapt the design of the curriculum in many areas of the college. Leaders recently introduced additive manufacturing into level 3 engineering vocational provision in response to the demands of the industry. They provide a curriculum that enables food and drink maintenance engineer apprentices to learn how to draw by hand, as well as using computer-aided design. In partnership with their member of parliament, leaders met with 15 local employers to discuss the future of furniture manufacturing in the area, leading to a new curriculum offer that will start in September 2023. However, in a

few curriculum areas, relationships with employers are in their infancy, and it is too early to see their impact.

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

Leaders have devised a clear and ambitious strategy that puts the guiding values of kindness, unity and excellence at the forefront. The strategy is being implemented on sound foundations that have been established well over several years. Leaders focus on the needs, well-being and future prospects of their students and apprentices, and a sense of passion for students and apprentices permeates the college.

Leaders have established positive relationships with many external agencies and organisations in the local area, including other education providers. They work with the local council to secure funding to support the local skills agenda. They take an active role in numerous groups and committees in the region to enhance the support they provide to their students and apprentices, including the Kirklees Violence Reduction Unit Partnership, the Prevent Education Quality Assurance Panel and the West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Network. Leaders recognise the important role they play in the communities of Kirklees and Dewsbury, and beyond.

Governance is effective. Governors bring a wide range of relevant skills and high levels of experience and expertise to their roles. They challenge leaders and hold them to account, and they are involved in strategic decisions. Governors also ensure they are visible in the college. Actions include visiting lessons and speaking with students and apprentices in the college.

Leaders and managers are keenly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They are proactive in identifying potential risks in the curriculum, such as the introduction of new qualifications or changes to the method of external assessment. They have implemented rigorous procedures to focus on and improve the quality of the curriculum, including student progress checks. They take swift action when they identify issues, which results in improvements for students and apprentices.

Leaders and managers have developed a vocational curriculum that targets local, regional and national skills needs. They deliberately plan to have a range of entry points so that students and apprentices, whatever their prior attainment, can access programmes that suit their needs. Tutors structure the content of the curriculum so that students and apprentices gain the knowledge and skills they need to enable them to progress to their next steps in education, training and employment.

Tutors have valuable vocational expertise and experience, which they use to teach students and apprentices, using real-life examples. They participate in frequent industrial updating to ensure that their vocational knowledge and practice is current. They benefit from a breadth of opportunities for developing their craft of teaching.

This includes the 'SPARC' (scheme for promotion of academic and research collaboration) programme, which requires tutors to pledge the skills they choose to work on during an academic year, supported by the quality team.

Most tutors plan learning carefully and use a variety of effective teaching methods to enable students and apprentices to develop detailed knowledge and sound skills on their programmes. They use age-appropriate learning resources and support students and apprentices well to understand key concepts and to be able to recall and use them in further learning. However, in a small number of education programmes for young people, teaching methods are less effective, and this means that students on these programmes do not make as much progress as they could.

Most tutors check students' and apprentices' understanding effectively, using a range of assessment methods. Helpful feedback from most tutors provides students and apprentices with an understanding of the progress they are making and guidance on how to improve their work. Most students produce a good standard of work and develop their knowledge and skills over time. However, in a few cases on adult learning programmes and education programmes for young people, feedback is not consistently useful. This results in a few students not being clear on what they need to do to move forward in their learning.

Tutors prepare students and apprentices well for final examinations and end-point assessments. Staff have been proactive in implementing changes to improve students' and apprentices' chances of achieving. For example, in animal care, when new examinations were introduced into vocational subjects, they quickly identified issues with achievement and provided students with additional time and resources, which improved these students' preparation for further examinations. They also used this learning to improve the design of the curriculum for the following cohort.

Most students and apprentices achieve well, with the vast majority gaining their vocational qualifications. For those who do not achieve, most continue their education at the college at higher levels of study or in different subjects in the same field, and the curriculum is designed carefully to support this. After their programmes, most students and apprentices continue in education or employment, following the support they receive, including support from careers advisers.

Students and apprentices have clear career goals, and most are prepared well for their next steps. Most tutors deliver an effective careers programme, which helps students and apprentices to make informed choices about their next steps. This support is enhanced by students and apprentices having access to an external independent careers service that is available on each campus. In addition, most students on education programmes for young people benefit from high-quality work placement opportunities.

Leaders and managers recognise that, although improving, attendance and punctuality are not yet good enough, and work to improve this is ongoing. The pastoral team supports students and apprentices to identify the root causes of poor attendance, and the team works together to help to remove barriers to learning.

Tutors provide individualised support, online and face to face, to ensure that students and apprentices who miss sessions continue to make progress. Students and apprentices are clear about the importance of good attendance and of the negative impact that non-attendance could have on their achievement and next steps.

Leaders, managers and tutors provide students and apprentices with opportunities to participate in a range of activities to develop their character, interests and talents. These include community work, social action projects and student-led social societies. However, they do not consistently check that students and apprentices on all programmes are aware of the extensive enrichment offer within curriculum areas or across the college and, as a result, too many students and apprentices do not benefit from these valuable opportunities.

Leaders, managers and tutors promote a culture where individual difference is celebrated, and diversity is understood as a valuable component to a harmonious society. Apprentices in accountancy explore racial stereotypes and identify ways to challenge these confidently in the workplace. Students in beauty therapy work with community organisations to promote the importance of identity. Food and drink maintenance engineer apprentices learn about world affairs, such as the conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the population. Students and apprentices collaborate well together, are considerate of the different views of others and value the diverse community in which they learn.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take effective steps to ensure that students and apprentices are kept safe. Those responsible for safeguarding are trained well and have the experience they need for their role. They implement their comprehensive policies effectively, including for safeguarding, 'Prevent' duty and safe recruitment.

Staff undertake appropriate training in safeguarding topics and know how to report safeguarding concerns, including low-level concerns. These are followed up swiftly by the safeguarding team, who involve and signpost to external agencies frequently and appropriately.

Leaders understand the risks that their students and apprentices may encounter in the local area, including knife crime, gang culture and substance abuse. The senior designated safeguarding lead and her safeguarding team use a trauma-informed approach and restorative practice with positive results. They have strong links with external agencies, both locally and nationally, and use these to provide well-informed support to students and apprentices.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the areas of the curriculum that are not yet of consistently high quality, particularly on education programmes for young people.
- Ensure that the quality of feedback is consistently high to help students and apprentices understand how to improve.
- Continue to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that a much higher proportion of students and apprentices participate in the enrichment and wider curriculum opportunities that are available to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130537
Address	Manchester Road Huddersfield HD1 3LD
Contact number	01484 437000
Website	www.kirkleescollege.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Palvinder Singh
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2012
Main subcontractors	Staff Power Training Limited Castleview Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal curriculum quality and innovation, as nominee, and the assistant principal quality and study programmes, as skills 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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