

Inspection of Gateshead College

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 March 2023

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

Information about this provider

Gateshead College is a general further education college that provides a range of academic, vocational, apprenticeship and workforce development training from entry level to level 5. The college consists of one main campus and three academies in sport, construction and automotive skills. At the time of inspection, there were 2,600 learners on education programmes for young people with two thirds studying at level 3, and 165 learners with high needs. There were also 1,832 adult learners and 816 apprentices. Leaders and managers work with six subcontractors.

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

Staff at the college foster an inclusive culture where learners and apprentices feel valued, supported and respected. Learners and apprentices demonstrate exemplary behaviour in sessions and around college campuses. They know that inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated, and that staff will deal with such behaviour swiftly.

Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning and value highly the good-quality facilities at the college. Learners on creative courses such as film and television, media make-up, music, and art and design take part in exciting opportunities to work as part of a production team with their peers to make live broadcasts, film sets, music videos and television programmes.

Teachers plan learning very effectively to develop learners' and apprentices' confidence and resilience. Apprentices on the level 4 construction technician standard have placements with six different employers so that they experience varied workplaces and work with a diverse range of people. They become more confident at working in less familiar surroundings and gain resilience through the challenge of working with different employers. Learners with high needs develop their independence through activities such as travel training in urban areas and making drinks and toast independently at breaktimes.

Learners enjoy attending a broad range of high-quality enrichment activities which help them discover and further develop their interests beyond their main programme of study. Learners enjoy mixing with their peers from different programmes across the college. Learners make positive contributions to their local community. They volunteer to support home-schooled children in athletic camps, take the lead in fundraising for disaster relief projects and help with local food banks and poppy appeals.

Most learners and apprentices are very well prepared for their future careers and next steps. Leaders work well with subcontractors, such as Sora Services Limited, to provide adult learners with the skills they need for employment in areas with workforce shortages.

Apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours which help them to work confidently in their job roles. However, in a few instances, managers do not ensure that employers are involved in reviewing their apprentices' progress. These employers do not know what their apprentices are learning, or what they need to do to help apprentices apply and practise their knowledge and skills at work.

Learners with high needs enjoy gaining new knowledge and skills which prepare them for employment or further study. Most learners with high needs have an opportunity to try employment in their chosen sector. However, a few learners do not benefit from work placements, so they miss the opportunity to put into practice what they are learning.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work very successfully with partners to understand and influence local and regional strategic skills policy. They use their expertise to lead a range of steering groups and project boards that provide a significant contribution to the identification of emerging skills needs and that tackle recruitment challenges in growing sectors such as digital, construction, engineering, manufacturing and healthcare sectors. Leaders and managers use their strong partnerships with employers and sector specialists to plan and deliver an up-to-date curriculum in emerging technologies, such as film and television screen skills, electric vehicles, green energy and retrofit construction. Consequently, learners and apprentices gain relevant technical skills that give them a competitive edge when applying for work.

Governors, leaders, managers and staff have a clear and comprehensive understanding of how they contribute to meeting skills needs. They deliver highly effective programmes to address regional priorities, including developing English skills for the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers in the area and for the high numbers of unemployed adults. A significant proportion of adult learners enter employment in growth sectors such as creative media, digital industries and the rail sector when they complete their training.

Teachers involve employers and industry experts in teaching and learning very well. Most teachers organise significant input from industry, through live commissions, employer projects and workplace visits. In art and design, students create murals for the hospital dementia ward, catering students work in the kitchens and in front of house for prestigious dinners and digital students benefit from teaching sessions in a regional creative hub which offers hands-on experience of the latest equipment and industry practice in digital and immersive technology.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance have taken successful action to tackle the significant financial challenges that the college faced at the time of the previous inspection. At the same time, leaders have sustained or improved the quality of education for most learners. Leaders have ensured that the college has a highly relevant and innovative curriculum offer that is well considered and right for the local and regional economy. They have identified regional skills requirements through the development of skills panels, covering a range of emerging technologies which include screen skills, electric vehicles and battery manufacture. They work with Network Rail to give unemployed people in the North East the skills and behaviours that they need to meet the growing demand for jobs in the rail sector.

Managers and teachers have designed courses that enable adult learners to make swift progress. Leaders and managers work closely with stakeholders in the region, such as the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and other providers of English for

speakers of other languages (ESOL) to coordinate the local and regional curriculum offer to ensure efficient delivery and to provide a better service for their learners. Adult learners are highly motivated to achieve their qualifications and have clear plans in place for their next steps.

Teachers are highly experienced and qualified in their specialist subjects. They use their expert knowledge and a range of effective teaching methods very well to help learners and apprentices quickly develop the new knowledge and skills that they need to acquire. Teaching methods include breaking topics down into smaller chunks and using well-thought-out recall activities so that learners and apprentices can memorise key information and apply it to complex tasks. Teachers respond well to the varying needs of apprentices in theoretical electrical science by recapping and reviewing questions and by providing additional clarification on the mathematical concepts that underpin the curriculum. As a result, apprentices complete complex tasks accurately.

Most teachers use assessment methods effectively to identify the progress that learners and apprentices are making. Teachers use a range of questioning techniques, quizzes and peer assessment to help learners and apprentices recall and remember learning from previous lessons. On the level 3 extended diploma in sport, teachers provide specific feedback on learners' skills so that learners know what they need to do to improve and to achieve higher grades. In level 2 carpentry and joinery, teachers plan assessments appropriately to prepare apprentices for their end-point assessments and provide workshop activities to help apprentices with any skills that they struggle with.

Teachers and specialist careers advisers provide impartial careers advice and guidance at different stages of learners' and apprentices' learning journey. Careers sessions include projects designed and overseen by employers, university visits and suitable work placements. Apprentices are supported to prepare for job interviews early in their programme if they are not guaranteed a job or decide to choose a different career path. Learning facilitators help learners to write a career plan at the start of their programme which learners frequently revisit to review, reflect and to set themselves further career targets. As a result, learners and apprentices are very clear about the career that the course is preparing them for and feel well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders make good use of information from quality assurance activities to identify staff who would benefit from support to improve their teaching. Teachers continue to improve their teaching skills through external professional development, mandatory training and through an online internal 'teaching academy'. All teachers are mentored to improve their skills by lead practitioners who are expert teachers.

Teachers and learning facilitators plan and sequence learning appropriately to enable learners and apprentices to develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours over time. Apprentices on the level 2 carpentry and joinery programme learn how to make basic joints which they practise and perfect before moving on to more

complex roofing joints. They confidently move from labouring for skilled employees to completing jobs independently on building sites.

Teachers use learners' starting points well to plan learning so that learners are able to reach their full potential. Learners on ESOL courses have individualised learning plans which identify precise targets for them based on their starting points. As a result, learners are clear about which aspects of English they need to improve. Apprentices complete a review of their existing skills when they start their apprenticeship, and staff use the results of these very well to plan learning, set targets and to track apprentices' progress.

English and mathematics teachers have developed innovative strategies to help learners master techniques to make swift progress on important topics. English teachers have designed a useful colour-coded scheme which learners use confidently to assess and improve the quality of their answers in mock examinations. Mathematics teachers have developed 'prove it' activities through which learners demonstrate that they fully understand and can apply the mathematics skills that they have learned.

Teachers continue to develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills in their vocational and academic programmes. Learners and apprentices secure essential English and mathematics skills and knowledge within the context of their subject specialisms, which prepares them well for higher levels of study and for employment. Level 2 hairdressing learners use ratios well to dilute peroxide. Learners on rail courses can calculate accurately the stopping distance of a train from an obstruction further up the railway line.

Most learners and apprentices attend their lessons well. They are punctual and keen to learn. Leaders and managers maintain a high focus on attendance. They identify learners who do not attend well enough in weekly performance reviews and take appropriate action to help staff tackle poor attendance. Teachers support learners to catch up through additional sessions, online learning activities and one-to-one support.

Leaders have appropriate oversight of the progress of learners and apprentices. They use information from monitoring and reporting processes well to understand areas of underperformance and identify learners and apprentices at risk of falling behind. However, tracking of progress for learners with high needs is not done well enough and a small number of learners with high needs are not making expected progress. The lack of consistency in the quality of reviews for learners with high needs results in staff not fully checking that learners' planned outcomes are not being met. As a result, a small number of learners with high needs progress to courses at a lower or the same level.

Leaders and managers care about their staff and are considerate of their workload. Staff speak positively about working at the college and appreciate the consideration of leaders and managers.

Governance is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They are highly experienced in education, governance, healthcare, business, finance and law and use their knowledge and expertise to challenge leaders in order to help shape the curriculum and improve the quality of education. Governors have high aspirations for growth in new and emerging sectors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding across the college. Learners and apprentices feel safe and are confident to raise issues and concerns should they have any. Leaders recruit staff safely. They have in place suitable safeguarding policies which outline clearly how to raise and refer safeguarding concerns. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders have systems in place to identify inappropriate internet searches to identify learners and apprentices at risk of being radicalised or of being drawn into extremist behaviour.

Leaders have appointed a highly experienced mental health and well-being coordinator. The coordinator takes effective and immediate action to assure the safety and well-being of learners and apprentices. This intervention is effective in identifying and supporting learners and apprentices at immediate and serious risk of harm or injury.

Leaders have established successful links to external safeguarding agencies, such as the regional 'Prevent' coordinator. They use the information that they gain to ensure that staff, learners and apprentices have a broad understanding of local and regional risks.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that learners with high needs receive high-quality reviews of their progress to help them understand the progress that they are making towards their learning objectives and what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that all learners with high needs benefit from work placements so that they have an opportunity to put into practice what they are learning at college.
- Ensure that employers attend reviews so that they are clear about the progress that apprentices are making and can support them to develop their skills in the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130551
Address	Baltic Campus Quarryfield Road Gateshead NE8 3BE
Contact number	0191 4900300
Website	www.gateshead.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	David Alexander
Provider type	General Further Education College
Date of previous inspection	28 to 31 January 2020
Main subcontractors	Sora Services Limited Jewish Teachers' Training College North Music Trust Gateshead Football Club Christopher Warnock Eagles Community Foundation

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 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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