

Inspection of Yeovil College

Inspection dates:

7 to 10 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Yeovil College is a general further education college in Yeovil, Somerset. The college provides a range of vocational, academic and higher education courses and apprenticeships, from pre-entry level to level 6, and provision for learners with high needs. At the time of inspection, around 1800 learners aged 16 to 18, 1740 adult learners, and 980 apprentices were studying at the college. There were 117 learners in receipt of high-needs funding, of whom around half were on programmes specifically designed for learners with high needs.

Most learners aged 16 to 18 study at level 2 or level 3 on academic or vocational programmes. Most apprentices study on courses related to advanced manufacturing and aerospace, construction and business. Most adults study a programme in health and social care, English or mathematics. The college works with four subcontractors, who provide apprenticeships and adult programmes.

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

Learners on programmes specifically designed for those with high needs enjoy their time at college and feel safe. However, they do not follow an ambitious curriculum. Leaders and managers do not provide a curriculum that prepares these learners effectively for their next steps. For example, they do not gain useful experiences of work, volunteering or community activities. They do not receive effective careers advice and guidance and their knowledge of the options open to them after college is limited. As a result, they are not able to make informed choices about their futures.

Most learners enjoy their learning and are proud of the new skills and knowledge that they develop. They value their access to high-quality learning resources, which mirror those currently used in their chosen industries. For example, apprentices on aeronautical engineering courses appreciate advanced resources, including a wind tunnel and computer-aided-design suites. Adults on the Access programmes value the innovative and highly effective technologies that they can use, such as virtual reality equipment when learning about human anatomy.

Learners and apprentices value the positive relationships that they develop with teachers and tutors. The vast majority of learners report that staff challenge and motivate them well to achieve the best they can and realise their ambitions.

Most learners develop valuable new skills and grow in confidence. Adults studying on English for speakers of other languages programmes take advantage of new learning opportunities that arise from their training, including moving on to Access to higher education programmes. Almost all apprentices secure employment and take on additional responsibilities at work, and a high proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds go on to higher level study or employment.

The vast majority of learners and apprentices feel safe at college and in their workplaces. Instances of bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviours are rare. Learners know who to speak to if they need help and feel well supported by teachers and managers.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work productively with a wide range of local and regional stakeholders. These include local authorities, large and small businesses, community and skills groups, and schools and colleges in Somerset and Dorset. Leaders have ensured that the college is effectively involved in ambitious socially- and commercially-focused economic growth initiatives in the area. They understand most key stakeholders' and learners' needs and have gained their confidence. The stakeholders view the college and its senior staff as a dependable, valuable and highly responsive partner. The college holds an influential role to determine plans in key areas for focused development and growth. These include advanced

manufacturing techniques, digital systems, science, construction, electric vehicles, fuel cell technologies and health.

In the vast majority of instances, leaders are collaborating effectively with employers to enhance existing curriculums and introduce new training to support local skills needs. For example, leaders engaged effectively with dental laboratories, so they can work together to provide training in digital dental laboratory skills. However, the skills needs of learners with high needs are not being met. Too few learners with high needs gain appropriate experience of work, volunteering or community activities.

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

The vast majority of learners receive a good quality of education. They develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to move on to employment, further training, or to play a more effective part in their communities. However, leaders have not dealt effectively with weaknesses in the provision for learners with high needs. They have not ensured that these learners make the progress they should according to the goals in their education, health and care plans.

In all provision types, there are variations in the quality of provision for different learners. Managers produce quality improvement plans, but leaders do not hold them to account or ensure that college improvement priorities are being enacted effectively.

Teachers on programmes specifically designed for learners with high needs do not measure what learners can already do before they plan their learning. They do not assess carefully enough the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners gain to inform what they should learn next. Some learners get insufficient support to help them understand how to complete tasks or learn new skills. In contrast, other learners receive too much support, which restricts their ability to develop independence. Leaders' and managers' aspirations for these learners are too low.

Teachers of learners with high needs on academic and vocational programmes hold higher aspirations for their learners. However, too few teachers and support workers have the necessary training, skills or experience to fully meet the learners' needs. As a result, these learners do not receive the support they need to achieve their potential or meet the goals stated in their education, health and care plans.

Governors do not receive the timely information necessary to effectively support senior leaders. For example, governors did not receive the college quality improvement plan between May 2022 and November 2023 and so were unable to review the impacts of improvement actions taken. Too often, essential information is not provided to governors in advance of meetings. As a result, governors do not have time to familiarise themselves with matters to inform effective questions. Too often, new initiatives presented to governors lack impact evaluation plans.

In contrast to the provision for learners with high needs, the vast majority of curriculums for 16 to 18-year-olds, adults and apprentices are ambitious. They have an effective focus on preparing learners for further study and future employment. For example, most apprentices' training is challenging, well planned, and includes knowledge specifically requested by employers, even though it is not required for the apprenticeship standard. As a result, apprentices develop valuable new skills and knowledge, helping them to become highly skilled employees.

Most teachers use assessment effectively to check the new knowledge and skills that learners develop. They identify gaps in learners' understanding and adapt their teaching to fill these. For example, in level 3 sports coaching, teachers use video evidence from learner-led training sessions to identify potential improvements and plan additional teaching.

The vast majority of teachers have substantial specialist knowledge in their subject areas. They use this knowledge to enrich their teaching and help learners make effective links between their classroom learning and future opportunities for employment or further study. As a result, learners see the relevance of the skills and knowledge that they develop and are motivated to succeed. However, in a minority of instances, teachers of adult courses do not track learners' new skills and knowledge well enough. As a result, the pace of learning is slowed for a small number of learners.

Most teachers use teaching techniques effectively to support learners' development of new knowledge. For example, in A level business, teachers use effective questioning as part of recall activities to ensure learners retain key information that relates to formal assessment. As a result, learners become better equipped for examinations and grow in confidence as they recognise what they have learned.

Leaders and managers use community funding effectively to develop programmes that support vulnerable and disadvantaged adults. They have built effective networks with local stakeholders, including Jobcentre Plus, to meet the needs of adult learners. Consequently, adults routinely develop the appropriate skills that they need to enter employment and grow in confidence. As a result, most of these learners secure jobs or continue in further study.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of learners' behaviour. They effectively promote a culture of positive re-enforcement, which learners appreciate and to which they respond well. However, in a small number of cases, such as GCSE English, attendance is below the aspirations of leaders and strategies to improve this have not been effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that most learners and apprentices benefit from useful careers advice and guidance. As a result, the vast majority of learners and apprentices understand the opportunities that are available to them and are well supported to make decisions about new jobs or further study.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have increased the resources available for the safeguarding team, who have dealt well with a rising number of safeguarding cases. However, leaders' monitoring of processes to record concerns about learners' safety and well-being needs to be more effective.

Learners receive appropriate training to develop their understanding of topics, such as staying safe online and healthy relationships. However, too many learners have only a superficial understanding of the dangers and signs of radicalisation.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve rapidly the quality of programmes for learners with high needs.
- Ensure that teachers and support staff in academic and vocational areas have the necessary skills and knowledge to support learners with high needs effectively.
- Monitor improvement plans more effectively and ensure they have a positive impact on the quality of education.
- Ensure that leaders have an effective oversight of the processes designed to maintain learner safety.
- Make sure that governors receive sufficient timely information to hold college leaders to account.
- Make sure that all learners have a secure knowledge of the signs and dangers associated with radicalisation.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130805
Address	Mudford Road Yeovil Somerset BA21 4DR
Contact number	01935423921
Website	www.yeovil.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Mark Bolton
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	4 to 7 October 2016
Main subcontractors	Gregory Distribution Limited University of Plymouth FGP Systems Limited The Skills Network Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice 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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