

Inspection of The Henley College

Inspection dates: 28 to 31 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
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

The Henley College is a sixth-form college with two adjacent sites based in Henley, Oxfordshire. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,800 full-time learners. 1100 learners were studying A-levels, and 500 were studying vocational courses. At level 3, courses include A levels and BTECs. The college offers level 2 provision for approximately 100 learners, which includes re-takes in English and mathematics GCSE alongside a variety of vocational courses, such as business, engineering and health and social care. There were 44 learners in receipt of high needs funding and 47 learners with an education health care plan. There were six learners who are children looked after.

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

Most learners are ambitious, motivated and keen to achieve. Learners rightly speak highly of the excellent support they receive from subject and pastoral staff, who help them to stay on track and, in most cases, make effective progress.

Staff set high expectations of behaviour, which learners meet successfully. Learners appreciate the inclusive, respectful and positive environment in which they learn. Learners are helpful and very polite to visitors. Learners have a good understanding of British values, which they demonstrate consistently well around the campus. In most cases, learners pay close attention in class to teachers and value views and ideas from their peers.

Most learners make good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and behaviours. As a result, learners are well prepared for their next steps and move on successfully to further study, an apprenticeship or work. Learners with high needs make excellent progress and flourish following a challenging curriculum in a nurturing environment. This helps them to build their independence and work readiness skills very effectively.

Learners feel safe when on the two college campuses. They know how to report concerns should they have them. Staff and learners do not tolerate bullying, harassment and abuse and, as a result, instances of these are very rare. All learners value highly the well-being team, whose members provide swift support and guidance. As a result, learners settle into college quickly and feel comfortable to be themselves.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers demonstrate their clear understanding of local and regional skills needs, including those identified by the Oxford local enterprise partnership (OXLEP) they work with. They have changed their curriculum offer to make sure it meets the identified skills needs in the region. For example, they have recently introduced and completed a new robotics engineering course to upskill adults in employment in engineering companies.

Leaders and managers work effectively in partnership with other colleges in the region as part of a skills accelerator group. They ensure that all subjects and priority sectors are offered in the region so that learners have access to useful and specialist courses and resources to support their future career development. As a direct result of OXLEP funding, leaders have created an advanced digital and science centre. This enables learners to benefit from leading science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics related facilities.

Leaders have not yet ensured that involvement of stakeholders in the planning, design and implementation of the curriculum is consistent in all areas. For example,

in vocational health and social care, A-level psychology and A-level physical education, there is little or no input into the subjects taught or the order in which topics are taught. Staff do not use stakeholders' and employers' expertise sufficiently well to develop current and appropriate course content tailored to local, regional and national skills needs.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear rationale for the curriculum to ensure that all learners develop the necessary skills they need for their futures and fulfil their academic and entrepreneurial aspirations. Leaders have recently implemented a 'skills builder' programme, which helps most learners to be aware of, and to develop, valuable skills to fulfil their career ambitions, such as problem-solving, critical thinking and communication. Learners with high needs develop relevant independent life skills and work-related skills quickly and effectively.

Leaders and teachers understand the needs of their learners well. They use this information diligently to select the content and order of the curriculum, which helps most learners to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours effectively. Teachers focus initially on fundamental concepts before building on these to teach increasingly more challenging topics. For example, teachers in level 2 and 3 public services changed the curriculum to introduce fitness earlier in the programme. This enables learners to assess and improve their fitness levels, which is essential for future career routes such as the fire service. In A-level psychology, learners initially learn the meaning of attachment before learning about relevant theories such as Bowlby's monotropic theory and Schaeffer's stages of attachment.

Leaders and teachers are ambitious for learners, especially those with high needs. Leaders consult with parents and carers of learners with high needs effectively in order to create a broad and challenging curriculum to meet learners' needs successfully. As a result, these learners develop valuable skills for adult life quickly. In English literature and psychology A-levels, teachers frequently provide learners with challenging tasks and activities that support learners to develop their skills to approach their examinations with a high level of confidence. Leaders recognise that not all learners attend well in a few curriculum areas such as GCSE mathematics and public services, which slows their progress. Leaders have clear and effective plans in place, but it is too early to see the impact of these.

Well-qualified teachers with strong subject knowledge help learners to understand new information quickly. In A-level English literature, teachers provide students with very clear instructions to focus on the key concepts of structure, theme and context. Learners are immediately immersed in their learning and complete tasks in a purposeful and energetic way.

Leaders ensure that teachers take part in useful development activities which help them to improve their teaching skills and knowledge of their industries. For example, staff who work with learners with high needs take part in relevant training so that

they understand how best to meet learners' individual needs very successfully. Teachers in engineering keep up to date with current practices, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, through industry exhibitions, which they share with learners well.

Most teachers use their expertise to plan interesting and stimulating lessons skilfully, which learners value. For example, in A-level English literature, teachers have established positive learning environments where learners are encouraged to discuss and debate collaboratively, which they willingly do. In psychology A-level, teachers proactively support learners to explore and discover the meaning of words in the context of psychology in order to develop their technical terminology very well. In a small number of cases, leaders have not ensured that suitably skilled teachers are available to provide high-quality education to all learners. As a result, not all learners make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Most teachers use a range of appropriate assessment techniques to check learners' understanding well and help them to recall their learning over time. They use this information skilfully to provide valuable feedback. In A-level media, teachers test learners' understanding frequently in lessons and provide very swift feedback, which learners value as it helps them to improve the quality of their work quickly over time and fill any gaps in their understanding.

Leaders provide an array of enrichment opportunities for learners to participate in, including clubs, societies and sporting activities. For example, learners, including those with high needs, presented business ideas to high-profile employers at a Dragon's Den event to showcase the skills they have acquired during their time at college. Leaders recognise that not all learners currently participate in these activities and, as a result, do not develop their wider skills and interests.

Leaders and teachers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college clearly. They have identified the small number of curriculum areas where too many learners have not achieved their qualification. They have used this information diligently to provide more effective support to learners. For example, in A-level physical education and media, teachers now provide more effective feedback and guidance on coursework, and as a result, learners are making substantial progress.

Staff are proud to work at the college. They describe leaders as approachable and focused on creating a positive and supportive culture to work in. Staff appreciate the effective work-life balance and feel valued by leaders and managers, which ensures that they are motivated at work.

Leaders benefit from effective oversight from skilled and experienced governors. Governors use their expertise well to provide effective support and challenge to senior leaders. Leaders provide governors with useful reports which help them to understand strengths and weaknesses well. As a result, governors rightly focus on areas which will have the greatest impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The members of the suitably qualified safeguarding team use appropriate policies and processes to help keep learners safe. They monitor safeguarding concerns closely and intervene swiftly and effectively, using external agencies when appropriate. Leaders ensure that all staff receive frequent training on safeguarding. Leaders recruit staff safely and ensure that appropriate checks are conducted before they start work with learners.

Safeguarding staff have a clear understanding of the learners that are at risk and have appropriate measures in place to keep these learners safe. Learners recall valuable learning on topics such as radicalisation and sexual harassment.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that they improve the attendance of the small number of learners with poor attendance so that they can make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that the small minority of teachers who do not currently provide a consistently high quality of education improve rapidly.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all learners benefit from a personal development programme of learning that helps them to develop their wider skills and interests.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130789
Address	Deanfield Avenue Henley-on-Thames Oxfordshire RG9 1UH
Contact number	01491 579 988
Website	www.henleycol.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Satwant Deol
Provider type	Sixth-form college
Dates of previous inspection	22 to 25 October 2019
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant 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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