

Inspection of New College Pontefract

Inspection dates: 16 to 19 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Education programmes for young people

Outstanding

Provision for learners with high needs

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

New College Pontefract is an academy for students aged 16 to 19 based in Pontefract, West Yorkshire. It is part of the New Collaborative Learning Trust. The college provides a broad range of A levels and applied general and technical qualifications. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,621 students enrolled at the college. Of these, 1,229 are on A-level courses, 820 on applied general courses and 531 on mixed programmes.

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

Students demonstrate exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the college. They have highly positive attitudes to their studies, and they complete tasks conscientiously and to the best of their abilities. Almost all students have high attendance, and on the rare occasions when students' attendance falls below expectations, staff take action to support students to catch up swiftly.

Students benefit from a very supportive culture at the college. They develop very positive relationships with teachers and staff in a supportive role. Staff help students to understand how to learn and study productively. Students are very keen to improve the quality of their work and the grades that they achieve, and they develop useful independent study skills. Students are positive about attending extra classes, where they value the support they are given to improve.

Students make good use of their independent study periods. They use an online system well to track their own progress, communicate with staff and receive comments on how to improve their work. Students gather in the social areas and open learning spaces, which provide a welcoming and safe environment for them to socialise and study independently.

Students feel safe at the college. They recognise the college as being an inclusive and diverse community, where they feel comfortable. Students are proud to be part of the college's community. They understand how to report any safeguarding concerns, and they feel confident that staff will take appropriate and swift action should any issues arise.

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

Leaders and subject specialist staff have designed a highly ambitious curriculum across a broad range of subjects. The range of academic and vocational subjects that students can study prepares students well for higher education and meets the needs of a wide range of employment sectors. Students are well prepared to take their next steps in a range of career paths.

Curriculum experts plan the content and sequencing of the curriculum very well. They have a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills that students need to develop. Teachers plan the curriculum to enable students to master topics before moving on to more complex subjects. In biology classes, students learn about cells and molecules, which they later apply when studying genetics. In English Literature, students study poetry, developing their understanding of terminology and context. They then explore connections across literary texts and become more critical and evaluative. Teachers enable students to build and consolidate the subject-specific and wider knowledge and skills they need to achieve success.

Teachers establish students' starting points and any support needs quickly and accurately before students join the college and in their early days on their courses. Teachers are familiar with students' support plans and follow them carefully for those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the small number of students with high needs. Adaptive technology or specialist equipment is available for students to use if required. Students with SEND or high needs engage fully in the curriculum and achieve in line with their peers.

Leaders and managers have a clear strategy and set high expectations for the assessment of students' work. Teachers provide highly specific feedback, which supports students to identify how they can achieve higher grades. Following formal assessments, teachers help students to reflect on how they prepared and which of the strategies they used was the most helpful. Staff expect students to take responsibility for their own learning and identify what further work they still need to do. Students plan effective actions to address any gaps and to improve their work. They become more autonomous, developing independence, resilience, self-discipline, and time management skills.

Managers ensure that all teachers plan and provide students with directed independent learning (DIL) activities to support the taught curriculum. The DIL tasks challenge students to complete retrieval activities to recall and reinforce prior learning. Activities focus on the current topic and preview future learning to help students remember more, deepen their understanding and embed knowledge into their long-term memory. Students gain confidence and fluency, and almost all make sustained progress and meet demanding curriculum goals.

A very high proportion of students, including those with high needs or other learning difficulties or disabilities, achieve their planned qualifications with high grades. Because of their participation in the curriculum, many students progress to higher-level study at degree level or apprenticeships at level 4 and above. Leaders encourage students to raise their aspirations, and a significant number of students who secure university offers are from families with no previous history of higher education. Of the students who do not progress to university or apprenticeships, most obtain jobs, often in sectors and roles that the course they studied helped to prepare them for.

Leaders and managers provide a very broad range of enrichment activities for students, and almost all students participate in activities in which they have a personal interest or that are specific to their studies. Staff provide activities such as team sports, nature clubs and business and enterprise projects. Students on sports courses can undertake coaching with school pupils and youth groups abroad. Leaders and managers have forged very strong relationships with an assisted living facility, which offers opportunities to students from a range of curriculum areas to broaden their interests and develop social responsibility. Sports students provide seated curling and boccia; students on information technology courses help residents to use their mobile phones, and students of psychology deliver brain training workshops. Students on A-level mathematics act as mentors for children in a primary school.

Staff ensure that all students benefit from extensive careers advice, both within the curriculum and beyond. They provide bespoke support to students pursuing competitive higher education courses in dentistry, medicine and veterinary science, with support for those who aspire to attend prestigious universities. Students undertake work experience appropriate to their course. Most students on vocational programmes complete a work experience module. Staff support students on A-level programmes to engage in direct work experience, work-related learning or independent research to broaden their skills and interests.

Staff have access to frequent training to improve their subject knowledge and teaching skills. There is an expectation by leaders that staff complete at least one professional enquiry annually to improve their practice. Leaders have recently appointed instructional coaches to support staff to improve and develop specific knowledge and skills about the most effective teaching methods. The trust works collaboratively to ensure the sharing of best practice across the constituent colleges.

Leaders and managers have in place effective arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of the provision. At course level, staff compile self-assessment reports and conduct student surveys, and leaders use this information, together with what they learn from their lesson visits, to set improvement actions. Team teaching takes place to support less experienced staff, and leaders signpost teachers to useful strategies in order to develop the quality of their teaching.

Leaders and managers are very well supported by a trust board of directors and a local advisory group. The trust board has a strong focus on its aim to facilitate the social mobility of local students. Members of the advisory group are very committed and have high expectations of the staff and students. The local advisory group completes regular skills audits to ensure that its members have the required range of skills to support and challenge leaders effectively. Through various committees, they help to steer improvements and ensure that leaders act promptly and effectively when required to do so.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers foster a very effective culture of safeguarding. All staff have a very clear understanding of safeguarding issues, and those in key roles have qualifications in safeguarding. Leaders and managers facilitate contractors, such as bus drivers, to complete safeguarding training to help them identify any concerns about students that arise on the journey to and from college. Communal areas, both inside and outside the college, are very well supervised by approachable staff who have positive relationships with students and can signpost them to any help should they need it.

Staff identify and report any safeguarding concerns promptly. They keep detailed records of the support and any actions that they put in place. Leaders and managers have strong links with external agencies, both locally and nationally, which ensures

they are well informed to support students. When necessary, staff make timely referrals to outside agencies, such as the police and child and adolescent mental health services. Where appropriate, they arrange meetings with parents or guardians. Staff provide space in the college for agencies such as Turning Point to carry out work with vulnerable students.

Provider details

Unique reference number	144732
Address	Park Lane Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 4QR
Contact number	01977702139
Website	https://ncpontefract.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Vicky Marks
Provider type	16 to 19 academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the 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

Joanne Stork, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Malcolm Fraser	His Majesty's Inspector
Beth Selwood	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Slassor	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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