

# Inspection of Hartlepool College of Further Education

Inspection dates: 2 to 5 May 2023

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

## Information about this provider

Hartlepool College of Further Education is a general further education college that provides a range of vocational and technical courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,063 learners on education programmes for young people, 1,334 adult learners, 1,026 apprentices and 61 learners with high needs. The college works with three subcontractors, GEM Training Limited, Teesside University and Learning for Excellence Limited, to provide adult learning programmes and apprenticeships.

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

Learners and apprentices benefit greatly from the supportive environment at the college. They speak highly of the positive culture and the relationships that they have with their peers and staff. Learners and apprentices demonstrate confidence, respect and empathy for each other and are well integrated into college life. They are well prepared for their lives outside college and their future careers.

Learners and apprentices are taught by knowledgeable staff who bring high levels of experience from their specialist industries. Teachers use their experience to enliven learning, often using examples from their own practice in their sector. Learners and apprentices benefit from teachers' effective explanation of concepts, and are motivated to forge careers in their chosen fields.

Learners and apprentices are set high expectations for professional standards. Staff are ambitious for their learners and apprentices, and encourage them to demonstrate professional values and industry-related standards. Learners and apprentices are enthusiastic and motivated to learn, demonstrating a consistently high level of respect.

Learners and apprentices, including those with high needs, feel safe at the college. They feel confident to talk to their teachers and welfare mentors if they have any issues or concerns, and know that these would be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers work effectively with stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of the skills needs in the region. They are proactive in their approach to working with the mayoral combined authority and the local enterprise partnership in the region, the local authority, employer representative bodies and key employers to understand local and regional priorities. They provide apprenticeships in response to specific needs of employers, and have clear progression routes to employment from education programmes for young people. Leaders make effective use of information that they have to ensure their adult learning offer is flexible and responsive to skills needs.

Leaders and managers have in place a curriculum that successfully contributes to meeting skills needs across most areas. They are clear about the importance of the construction and engineering sectors in the local area. Consequently, the majority of apprenticeship programmes and a large volume of adult provision are in these sectors. Stakeholders speak particularly highly of the large number of adult learners who gain jobs as a result of attending the bespoke employer-led courses. Stakeholders are actively involved in the design and implementation of many apprenticeship and adult learning programmes. However, stakeholder engagement

in provision for young people and learners with high needs is not consistently strong.

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

Leaders and managers are ambitious for their learners and apprentices. They have a well-considered curriculum that offers a wide range of progression pathways, enabling learners and apprentices to progress to further study or work. They consider the needs of their learners and apprentices carefully, including those who have been out of education for a significant period of time. Adult learners studying access to higher education courses can choose from a range of pathways including nursing, midwifery, social care and paramedic services. Learners speak highly of their courses, and value the progress that they make and how successfully they are prepared for their next steps.

Leaders and managers have chosen subcontractors appropriately to provide specialised level 6 apprenticeships in construction and engineering and much-needed routes into manufacturing for adults who are unemployed. They carry out comprehensive assessments of subcontractors' ability to provide good-quality training and monitor performance through frequent reviews and audits. Subcontractor staff benefit from access to college training, including on safeguarding and the craft of teaching.

Teachers plan learning effectively. They ensure that learners and apprentices secure fundamental knowledge and industry-related skills before applying them to more complex tasks. Most teachers use initial assessment appropriately to identify what learners and apprentices already know and can do. They use this information well to plan meaningful and well-structured learning that is responsive to learners' and apprentices' individual needs and enables them to make good progress.

Leaders and managers care passionately about their staff and are considerate of their well-being. Staff workload is managed carefully, and staff feel supported by their managers, who consider sensitively class cover requirements and flexible working arrangements. Staff speak positively about working at the college.

Leaders and managers recruit highly qualified and experienced staff. Teachers and learning support staff have access to a comprehensive training programme to enhance further the quality of their teaching and support, which they value highly. Staff use their knowledge and experience well to provide inclusive and good-quality teaching and support.

Learners benefit from high-quality teaching across the curriculum. Teachers skilfully use questioning and revision activities to check and reinforce learners' knowledge and understanding. They identify and correct misconceptions and encourage deeper thinking through the questions they ask. For example, teachers in hairdressing use effective questioning skills to check learning and correct errors in skills and knowledge to ensure that all learners understand and contribute towards planning a

creative image. Teachers provide effective guidance to enable plumbing students to recall the different types of hot water systems and associated building and safety regulations, and to apply this knowledge when learning about installation of unvented hot water systems.

Apprentices are provided with highly effective training and coaching to ensure they are suitably prepared for their end-point assessment. Throughout the apprenticeship programme, tutors link theoretical knowledge well by introducing practical tasks quickly so apprentices can reflect, link and apply their knowledge in a simulated workplace environment. As a result, apprentices develop and retain the knowledge and skills that they gain over time, which significantly contributes to their success at work and achieving their intended outcomes.

Teachers assess learners' and apprentices' work accurately. They use effective questioning and frequent assessments to measure how well learners and apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Teachers provide useful feedback and hold valuable conversations with learners and apprentices to provide clear information on how to improve. Learners and apprentices respond appropriately to this feedback, and make improvements needed to complete tasks to a high standard and consolidate their knowledge and skills well over time.

Learners and apprentices train using industry-standard equipment and resources. These include automated milling and grinding machinery, specialist industrial rigs and professional facilities such as modern hair salons. These resources support learners and apprentices well to develop the skills that they need to be well prepared for employment.

Governance is effective. Governors bring a range of experience in safeguarding, child protection, education, governance, finance and business. Board members carefully scrutinise reports and data, and provide challenge and support to leaders to help shape the college's direction. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and actively participate in events at the college such as celebration days and learning walks.

The standard of work produced by learners and apprentices is mostly of a high standard. On engineering apprenticeships, apprentices produce a very high standard of practical work, quickly become confident in their abilities and develop into proficient employees. In GCSE English, learners demonstrate through the written work that they produce that they are increasing their confidence and skills in using vocabulary and language techniques accurately and in structuring their work.

Learners, including those with high needs, and apprentices are prepared effectively for their next steps and benefit from many opportunities to consider their career options. Learners and apprentices attend a wide range of events which provide opportunities for them to explore areas of further study or work. The college holds annual careers events at which learners and apprentices are exposed to a range of outside speakers and organisations. Staff conduct workshops on writing curriculum vitae and mock interviews, as well as arrange trips to a range of universities.

Learners and apprentices develop their vocational mathematical skills successfully. Apprentices in engineering complete demanding activities which are underpinned by accurate mathematical calculations. In accounting, adult learners practise their skills of inputting income and expenditure into spreadsheets using complex formulae. Learners and apprentices recognise the importance of these skills for their employment and future careers.

In a few instances, teachers do not develop learners' written and grammatical skills well enough. In level 2 plumbing, teachers do not provide learners with the support required to improve their written skills. In level 1 hairdressing and level 3 policing, learners continue to make the same mistakes over time as these mistakes are not consistently corrected. As a result, learners on these programmes are not making sufficient progress in developing their written English skills.

Across most courses, learners' attendance is below the college's expectations. Leaders recognise that attendance needs to improve and are taking appropriate action. This includes supporting learners with poor attendance to attend more frequently and the deployment of an increased number of welfare, attendance and retention monitors. When learners have low attendance, staff put strategies in place to enable them to catch up on missed work. These actions are starting to have a positive impact, but attendance remains too low.

Leaders and managers have appropriate oversight of the quality of the provision. They use information from monitoring and reporting processes to understand and identify areas of underperformance. Once identified, senior leaders put interventions and support mechanisms in place that are monitored and reviewed at frequent intervals. However, in a small number of cases, leaders and managers do not put actions in place quickly enough and, as a result, the impact of these interventions is too slow.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have implemented effective safeguarding policies and procedures that they use to keep learners and apprentices safe. They have clear lines for reporting concerns and, when issues are raised, including low-level concerns, they are dealt with appropriately and swiftly. Leaders and managers recruit staff safely and ensure that all staff are suitable to work with learners and apprentices, including those aged 16 to 18.

The designated safeguarding lead and members of the safeguarding team are appropriately trained and experienced for their roles. They understand their responsibilities for safeguarding their learners and apprentices, and support them with a wide range of issues. Leaders and managers provide staff with frequent training on safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and wider curriculum topics, ensuring that staff have the most up-to-date guidance.

Leaders and managers understand the need to prepare learners and apprentices for the specific risks that they may encounter where they live and work. The safeguarding team works effectively with a number of external agencies that support it with safeguarding concerns such as county lines and domestic violence. The team members liaise frequently with the regional Prevent coordinator, the local pupil referral unit and the local police, with whom they have formed effective working relationships.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Continue to improve attendance so that it is in line with college expectations.
- Ensure that teachers develop learners' written English skills effectively.
- Identify and quickly implement all actions that are needed to support quality improvements across the college.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130567
<b>Address</b>	Stockton Street Hartlepool TS24 7NT
<b>Contact number</b>	01429 295111
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hartlepoolfe.ac.uk">www.hartlepoolfe.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Darren Hankey
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 to 10 March 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Teesside University GEM Training Limited Learning for Excellence Limited

## 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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