

Inspection of Newbury College

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 March, and 21 and 22 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Newbury College is a general further education college based in Newbury, West Berkshire. The college is based on one campus but runs a range of football academies for young people in the West Berkshire region. Newbury College offers a wide range of programmes for adults, young people and apprentices from entry level to level 7. Currently, the college has approximately 2,014 students, of whom 187 are apprentices, 604 are students aged 16 to 19 years, and the remainder are adult students. The college has 120 students with high needs. The college also works with local schools to provide part-time vocational learning for pupils aged 14 to 16 years.

Leaders work with three subcontractors to provide opportunities for young people to complete the Prince's Trust Award and distance learning qualifications. They also deliver English and mathematics courses for adults.

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

Students and apprentices enjoy their time at college. Leaders and teachers create a calm and orderly classroom environment, where students and apprentices feel able to learn. This contributes to a positive commitment to learning from students and apprentices. Students and apprentices behave well in the classroom, and they are polite and respectful to each other and staff.

The experience of learning that students have is not consistently good across the different provision types. Young students and students with high needs do not have a uniformly good experience across their programmes. For example, teachers make good adaptations to the different needs of individual students with high needs. However, teachers do not set and monitor the achievement of targets with students well enough so that they have a secure overview of the new knowledge and skills that they have gained. For students aged 16 to 18, vocational courses are taught well. This is not the case in English and mathematics for those who need to achieve qualifications in these subjects.

Apprentices and students on foundation learning programmes benefit from good opportunities to extend their learning beyond their chosen subject. For example, engineering apprentices have the opportunity to add to their skills by completing a qualification in robotics. Many apprentices take part in volunteering, including at a project to build human powered vehicles in Ghana to transport people from remote areas.

Students and apprentices benefit from useful careers information, advice and guidance to help them prepare for their next steps. For example, all students and apprentices can access impartial careers advice through a qualified adviser. Adult students in access to higher education courses highly value the advice they receive to complete applications to university. Engineering apprentices are well supported to gain recognition with professional bodies to enhance their career journeys.

Apprentices benefit from an exceptionally well-taught curriculum. Leaders and staff work closely with employers to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of apprentices and their workplaces. For example, managers sought the views of a large engineering company to make sure that the content taught on the product design and development engineer apprenticeship was relevant to their industry.

Most students say they feel safe at the college. However, staff do not teach safeguarding topics well enough, especially in relation to healthy sexual relationships, to make sure that students have a good recall of these issues. A small minority of students spoke with inspectors about poor behaviour on the part of few of their peers. Staff are aware of this and take suitable action when necessary.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a clear and well-defined vision for the college, which is based around their ethos of preparing students for the world of work, known as 'careers, not courses'. They realise this through effective collaboration with a wide range of appropriate stakeholders, including employers, the chamber of commerce, the local authority, and the local enterprise partnership (LEP), to gain a secure understanding of the skills needs in the local area and wider region. For example, leaders have worked with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP to identify skills and resource needs related to sustainability. This work resulted in the successful development of the renewables centre at Newbury College, which provides resources to offer training in new technologies such as heat pumps and heat recovery systems.

Leaders collaborate well with stakeholders to ensure that students and apprentices acquire the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to be successful in the future. Consequently, most students and apprentices can use their skills quickly in the workplace or for further learning. For example, leaders work with local universities to review and add to the content of the access to HE courses. Leaders work with a major technology company to develop their chartered manager apprenticeship programme to prepare apprentices for specific work within the company.

Leaders and managers have aligned most of the vocational curriculum closely to take into account the needs of students, apprentices and stakeholders. Leaders understand the local and regional skills needs and shortages, and choose a relevant curriculum that provides most students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in life and employment. For example, level 3 electrical installation apprentices benefited from a speaker who provided information about employment law. However, for a large majority of programmes for students aged 16 to 19 years, stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in the design or implementation of the programme.

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

Leaders, managers and teachers have designed vocational curriculums effectively, so that students and apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their next steps. Teachers help students to build their knowledge over time so that they have the academic skills for further study. Leaders, where appropriate, have adapted the way they teach the curriculum to increase students' ability to participate. For example, for the level 2 counselling course they created a flexible distance learning curriculum so that students can study around their personal commitments. Leaders have also made sure that students have options to study through different levels of learning in their chosen subject. For learners with high needs, they have created three distinct pathways to meet students' needs and ambitions.

Leaders, managers and staff do not consistently have high ambitions for young students, including students with high needs. They have not ensured that students aged 16 to 19 are consistently taught a full and purposeful study programme that helps them to develop their wider knowledge, skills and behaviours beyond the core curriculum. Too many students do not benefit from a personal development curriculum to build their character, their understanding of healthy relationships or how to stay physically healthy.

Leaders ensure that young students in areas such as sports and public services have good opportunities to participate in work-related learning activities that enable them to understand more about careers in different industries. However, these opportunities are not equally available across other courses. Too few students who intend to seek employment at the end of their course attend external work experience placements. Consequently, these students are not being prepared effectively for work.

Managers and teachers have sequenced most of the vocational curriculum logically so that students and apprentices master fundamental knowledge before studying more complex content and topics. They carefully plan and teach the curriculum to ensure that useful topics are taught together so that students remember more over time. For example, adult students in access to nursing and midwifery benefit from learning about genetic approaches to psychology at the same time as studying genetics in biology, which helps them to link the two approaches.

Teachers in vocational subjects are well qualified and have expert knowledge in their subjects. They bring theory to life by relating it to practical techniques and work-related scenarios. They use a range of techniques effectively to enable students and apprentices to improve their understanding and deepen their knowledge of the topics they learn. Teachers encourage students and apprentices to collaborate and promote useful discussions, which help students to put what they have learned into practice. For example, in access to nursing and midwifery, teachers use discussion to enable adult students to share real-life experiences and individual research findings that enhance the understanding of all students about the function of glands. Most teachers use appropriate activities and methods, such as repetition, to ensure that students can fluently and consistently apply what they learn to different contexts under different conditions. For example, motor vehicle students make effective use of simulation software in and out of class to consolidate and check their knowledge.

In apprenticeships, teachers use assessment highly effectively to identify apprentices' starting points and ensure that they make excellent progress throughout their time at the college. Apprentices value the diverse, up-to-date knowledge and experience that teachers have, which they use exceptionally well. Teachers use a range of innovative and successful teaching strategies and provide highly useful feedback, enabling apprentices to prepare effectively for their end-point assessments. As a result, apprentices produce work of a high standard. Their work demonstrates technical competency, mastery of skills and in-depth knowledge of their chosen subjects. They make exceptional progress, become better at their

jobs, and move on to high-quality next steps at the end of their programme.

Although leaders have identified actions to improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics for students aged 16 to 19, progress is slow. Leaders do not support teachers effectively to ensure that they are competent in teaching these subjects. Teachers of English and mathematics for young students do not use the outcomes from assessments of students' knowledge effectively enough to adapt their teaching to correct misconceptions, and they do not have a good enough overview of the progress the students make. Students' attendance in these subjects is gradually improving but remains too low. Young students in English and mathematics do not make swift progress or achieve well in their examinations.

Leaders do not ensure that support assistants are consistently trained to support all students in foundation learning with sufficient urgency. As a result, support assistants who are trained are thinly spread, which limits the support for students. For example, new staff are unprepared to be able to support all students with epilepsy, which reduces the positive impact they could make on students' progress. Leaders have not ensured that staff are sufficiently ambitious for students with high needs who attend the foundation learning programmes. Staff do not ensure that students understand the targets they are working towards so that they can use their learning independently. Students in foundation learning do not benefit from sufficient careers information, advice and guidance so that they can plan their next steps effectively.

On programmes for young students, and in foundation learning, leaders, managers and teaching staff do not have a sufficient understanding of the progress that students make. Too few teachers use assessment effectively to inform what they teach. For example, teachers in foundation learning do not use assessment to enable students with high needs to understand what they have learned and how they can make more progress.

Most students and all apprentices in vocational studies benefit from useful, clear and focused feedback on the quality and standard of their work. For example, teachers at the football academies ensure that students understand how to achieve a distinction in their work and illustrate clearly where students can improve.

Leaders, managers and governors have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in most parts of the provision, including subcontracted provision. They use their quality assurance processes appropriately to evaluate most aspects of training. However, they acknowledge that it is too early to see the impact of the actions they have taken to improve specific weaknesses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have recently taken effective steps to strengthen safeguarding practices. They have suitable policies and procedures in place, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders and staff take effective actions when they have concerns about students' welfare. For example, they refer issues appropriately to external agencies, including children's services and the police. Leaders have recently improved their oversight of how safeguarding actions are recorded to ensure it is accurate. Where necessary, they put in place appropriate support plans and risk assessments.

Leaders provide information to students about different safeguarding issues, including harmful sexual behaviour.

Students feel safe. They feel confident that staff will respond appropriately and support them if they raise any issues or concerns.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that they provide students aged 16 to 19 years with a full personal development curriculum that includes helping them to recognise and report incidents of sexual harm and wider safeguarding issues.
- Leaders must ensure that all students aged 16 to 19 years are provided with opportunities to engage in work experience or work-related activities, to ensure they are prepared for the world of work.
- Leaders must ensure that the actions being taken to improve the quality of the English and mathematics provision are implemented effectively so that students make good progress in these subjects.
- Leaders must ensure that staff in foundation learning are sufficiently trained to provide the support that students need to make good progress.
- Teachers must ensure that they use assessment more effectively to inform their knowledge of students' progress and use this information to plan effective teaching.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130602
Address	Monks Lane Newbury Berkshire RG14 7TD
Contact number	01635845000
Website	http://www.newbury-college.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Iain Wolloff
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	27 January 2015
Main subcontractors	West Berkshire Training Consortium Adviza Partnership Ltd The Skills Network Ltd

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 students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records. The inspection took place on 14 to 17 March 2023. Inspectors returned to gather extra evidence on 21 and 22 June 2023.

Inspection team

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