

# Inspection of Askham Bryan College

Inspection dates:

19 to 22 September 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>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Askham Bryan College is a specialist land-based college operating from five campuses. The college offers provision in a range of land-based subjects, as well as in motor sports, sport and outdoor adventure. At the time of inspection, there were 1,274 learners on education programmes for young people, the majority of whom were studying at level 3. There were 147 learners with high needs, 107 adult learners and 419 apprentices.

The main campus in York is set in extensive grounds and includes specialist facilities such as the college's farm, a wildlife and conservation park, an equestrian centre and stables, a dairy unit, sports centres, engineering workshops for both cars and large farm vehicles, and learner accommodation. The majority of learners at the Middlesbrough campus study equine and animal management programmes. At Newcastle upon Tyne, all learners and apprentices study veterinary nursing. At the smaller Saltaire and Wakefield campuses, learners study animal management.

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

Learners are supported well to settle into learning and college life. Leaders have created a calm, purposeful and engaging learning environment that reflects many of the industries and professions to which learners and apprentices will progress.

Staff ensure that learners and apprentices have considerable opportunities to take part in competitions, social action projects and sporting events. Other learners get the chance to help at high-profile events that the college hosts, such as the British Eventing horse-riding trials. The range of activities provides learners and apprentices with opportunities to network with industry professionals and socialise with their peers, which they enjoy and benefit from.

Teachers are suitably qualified with relevant, and often current, industry experience. They use their knowledge well to ensure that learners and apprentices are taught relevant and up-to-date techniques and develop fluency and competency in the use of specialist terminology and vocabulary.

Leaders and managers across all curriculum areas set high expectations for the behaviour and conduct of learners and apprentices. There is a clear focus on developing a positive learning culture, which raises learners' aspirations and prepares them well for their next steps. Learners and apprentices understand the importance of these expectations, and this is reflected in their positive behaviour and attitudes towards learning.

Staff ensure that through the tutorial programme learners and apprentices develop and deepen their understanding of healthy eating and physical and mental well-being. Learners discuss issues such as sexual harassment, positive relationships, mental health, and equality and diversity in a safe and mature environment where they can learn from others.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and supported in learning and in the workplace. They are confident that if they do raise any issues or concerns, these will be dealt with effectively and efficiently. They understand that staff reinforce the strict wearing of lanyards for everyone's safety.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers have developed and maintained effective and long-standing relationships with relevant key stakeholders, which are beneficial to identifying and meeting skills needs, particularly in the land-based sector. Stakeholders speak positively about the college and value their relationships and the contribution that the college makes to the local, regional and national communities. The college works closely with Local Enterprise Partnerships in the Yorkshire area and with York and Middlesbrough local authorities. It is one of the four education providers in York that have formed the Higher York partnership, which aims to improve opportunities for

people in the city to access higher education and training. Staff at all levels are members of boards of organisations such as the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Landex and the Yorkshire Agricultural Society, through which they make valuable contributions to the changing landscape within their sector. Staff on these boards are at the forefront of new legislation, practices and research, which benefits the learner experience.

Leaders and managers fully involve relevant stakeholders in the design of all aspects of the curriculum. They gather the thoughts and opinions of relevant stakeholders in relation to the curriculum offer and content. The college has employer advisory boards that are well attended. Staff across the college use information from the work of these groups to inform the planning of the curriculum. For example, managers of the Prince's Trust provision work well with a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, and use this effective collaboration to inform and develop the programme. They have regular meetings and an annual review with the Prince's Trust to review key targets, including engagement and outcomes for learners.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear and purposeful intent for the curriculum that they offer, which is to meet skills needs, particularly in the land-based sector. They review the curriculum on a frequent basis to keep it in line with industry standards and requirements and to meet learners' and employers' needs.

Managers and teachers carefully sequence the curriculum and align it with the identified needs of employers and of learners and apprentices. Teachers ensure that learners and apprentices have a firm understanding of the principles of each subject before moving on to the development of more complex and demanding knowledge and skills. For example, livestock learners acquire knowledge about basic concepts of beef production and then apply this knowledge when analysing the quality, nutritional value and chemical content of maize silage. In equine care, learners use their knowledge from earlier learning in biology modules to develop their understanding of the beneficial impact of grooming on the circulatory system of a horse. Learners in sport successfully apply the knowledge gained from their theory sessions to practical activities that explore the relationship between joints and movement.

Leaders and managers have successfully developed a range of bespoke learning pathways to support learners with high needs. The curriculum focuses well on promoting and facilitating learners' knowledge and skills and enhancing their personal and social development, so they are prepared well for further study and employment. A high proportion of learners with an education, health and care plan progress to the next level of study. However, a few teachers working with learners with high needs do not make the best use of these plans to adjust and inform their

teaching and assessment practice. This slows the rate of progress of a few learners with high needs.

Leaders have invested significantly in the development of digital resources to meet sector needs, including a robotic milking machine, drone technology and virtual-reality design suites. Learners benefit from using virtual-reality equipment to move inside an animal cell and label the constituent parts, bringing their learning to life.

Most teachers use initial assessment well to identify any gaps in learners' and apprentices' previous learning. This information enables teachers to adapt programmes to meet the individual needs of learners and apprentices.

Teachers use effective teaching strategies to help learners recall and memorise key information that they need for future learning. They integrate the use of digital technologies to support learners and apprentices to revise, recall and reinforce their previous learning.

Most teachers assess learners' work accurately. They provide comprehensive and helpful feedback that clearly explains to learners and apprentices what they need to do to improve their work to a higher standard and develop their practical skills. Teachers challenge learners and apprentices to aim high and to take account of previous comments and recommendations in their subsequent pieces of work. However, in a few areas, aspects of feedback are less effective and do not highlight the actions that learners need to take to achieve high grades.

Teachers support learners and apprentices to develop their English and mathematical skills. The development of mathematical skills is an integral part of the curriculum and enables learners to develop increasingly complex skills that they apply in their vocational lessons. Learners' and apprentices' written work shows development in their knowledge and use of English over time. For example, their work shows the use of a more mature and technical vocabulary and the development of research, analysis and evaluation skills. However, a few teachers do not integrate the development of English skills into the curriculum well enough or provide learners with feedback on written work that identifies spelling and grammatical errors. As a result, a few learners and apprentices continue to repeat errors.

Staff provide learners and apprentices with helpful information on career opportunities. In motor sports, learners gain an insight about career options such as working in Formula One and Formula Three racing and in naval engineering. Veterinary nursing apprentices gain an understanding of opportunities to work overseas and becoming a manager or teacher. Weekly tutorial lessons include a focus on curriculum vitae writing, developing interview skills and preparing university applications.

Leaders and managers provide a helpful training programme for industry experts who are new to the teaching profession. The programme is based on the development of teachers' professional skills, English and mathematics knowledge,

and use of digital skills. This helps these teachers to develop their skills and progress onto courses leading to recognised teaching qualifications.

Leaders ensure that most teachers have manageable workloads and feel well supported. Teachers state that leaders and managers recognise the challenges associated with staffing gaps and the introduction of new systems, including the recently introduced online portfolio, and support them well while trying to alleviate pressure through recruiting to fill gaps in staffing. However, a few teachers continue to have challenging workloads.

Leaders and managers rightly recognise that in 2021/22 too many learners and apprentices left their programme before completing it. Leaders have placed a very high priority on reducing the proportion of learners who do not complete their course. They have taken a range of actions that include identifying the reasons why learners leave early, putting in place progress coaches to support learners who are at risk of leaving early, improving attendance in English and mathematics, ensuring that the quality of education that learners receive is high across all areas, and recruiting specialist staff where needed, such as in farm mechanisation. These actions are beginning to have a positive impact on the retention of learners and apprentices.

Leaders have in place an effective board of governors. Governors bring useful experience to the college, including from agriculture, further education, accounting and their work for professional bodies. Governors provide helpful scrutiny and support to leaders and hold them accountable for the progress that learners and apprentices make and the quality of the education provided. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the college and have a good understanding of the curriculum. They have a clear oversight of safeguarding, and all are trained appropriately.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Maintain the strong focus on improving retention.
- Continue to support staff to ensure that their workloads are manageable.
- Ensure that information gathered about all learners with an education, health and care plan is used to plan an effective individualised programme to meet their needs.
- Ensure that all staff support learners to develop their English skills.
- Ensure that all learners who are capable of achieving higher grades receive effective feedback that enables them to do so.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130595
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Website	<a href="https://www.askham-bryan.ac.uk/">https://www.askham-bryan.ac.uk/</a>
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Dr Tim Whitaker
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	15–16 March 2017
Main subcontractors	None

## 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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