

Inspection of Leicester College

Inspection dates: 3 to 6 October 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
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Leicester College is a large general further education college with three sites: Freeman's Park, Abbey Park and St Margaret's. All are in Leicester. At Freeman's Park, there are extensive construction, catering, and hair and beauty facilities. The provision at Abbey Park is broad. A nursery and mock ward have been installed for the T levels in health and education. New engineering classrooms are currently under development at this site. St Margaret's campus has dedicated resources for computing and creative courses. One specialist subcontractor, The National Space Centre, works in collaboration with leaders to co-design and teach level 3 immersive design and development.

Currently, there are 3,743 students on education programmes for young people. They study a range of vocational courses, including T levels. Leaders offer courses in most subject areas at levels 1 to 3. Around 2,500 students continue to study English and mathematics qualifications as part of their studies.

There are 1,132 apprentices, almost all of whom study standards-based apprenticeships. Just over half are adults. Most apprentices study courses in construction or engineering. Other apprentices study mainly business or dentistry apprenticeships.

Around 3,800 adults study courses from entry level to level 4. Courses broadly fall into one of four areas: employment; access to higher education; literacy and numeracy; and personal and professional development. Around 1,800 adults study English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Leaders offer a range of sector-based work academy programmes in partnership with large employers, such as the NHS. Adult learners study across all sites, in community venues and online.

There are 63 learners with high needs who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders offer courses that they group into three areas: learning for life, preparation for employment, and fulfilment/sensory courses.

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

Most students and apprentices enjoy their studies and benefit from good teaching. They rightly value the support and encouragement they receive from staff. Students, adults, apprentices and learners with high needs gain confidence in themselves and what they can achieve. They are well prepared to take their next steps in education, employment or living more independently.

Across the campuses, staff and students celebrate the diversity of the college community. Students co-host activities with local community groups to celebrate events such as Black History Month. Teachers and learning coaches hold meaningful discussions with students on topical matters. This helps them to learn how to explore each other's opinions respectfully. Students and apprentices feel welcome and can be themselves when they attend college. They demonstrate high standards of behaviour at all sites.

Most students on education programmes for young people benefit from their studies and attend their courses well. However, on a few courses, such as T-level childcare, level 2 beauty therapy and level 3 health and social care, students' attendance is too variable. Almost all younger students participate in useful work experience that supports them to develop their personal skills and vocational expertise. Many progress to employment or further study at college or university.

Managers develop a broad range of courses that meet adults' needs well. Adults can access training in a range of venues across the city or online. This provides them with the flexibility they need to be able to attend. Adults work hard, participate in lessons and rightly speak highly about how their knowledge and confidence develops. In a very few cases, adults on employability and access courses who have been away from education for some time feel daunted by their studies. They do not benefit from quick enough support to re-establish their study skills. As a result, a few adults initially make slower progress than their peers.

Apprentices value their training and the expertise of their teachers. Managers spend time with employers to carefully plan the studies of most apprentices. Apprentices complete extra training that equips them with the knowledge and skills their employers require. For example, carpentry and joinery apprentices learn specialist shop fitting techniques, which is a priority for employers. Most apprentices achieve their intended destination of permanent employment. Many level 3 team leader apprentices secure promotions and progress to the level 5 operations and departmental manager apprenticeship.

Learners with high needs benefit from suitably planned courses that meet their individual needs. Teachers carefully set targets for most students that are relevant to their starting points. However, in a very few cases, teachers set targets that are not appropriately challenging. For example, students who can make a hot drink are set targets to make a cold one. This does not challenge them to make the progress they are capable of. Managers and teachers make appropriate adaptations to support students with specific needs. Students who study courses to prepare them for

employment benefit from relevant work experience activities. They first start work in the college's cafes in the city centre or at Freeman's Park. After this valuable preparatory work, they progress to their external work placements.

Students and apprentices have access to a wide range of support and activities to help them with their mental and physical well-being. This includes access to beneficial mental health and counselling services. Students value the guidance they receive and make good use of the support that is on offer.

Students, adults, apprentices and learners with high needs feel safe at the college and at work. When students raise any concerns, staff quickly provide useful assistance and guidance. Most students and apprentices know what extremism and radicalisation are. They understand local risks and know how to identify things that would cause them concern or harm.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders establish productive links with a wide range of stakeholders and employers. They use these relationships to gather relevant feedback on the design and content of most courses. Leaders use a range of approaches to do this. For example, employers participate in skills advisory boards. Managers also gather feedback from students' work placements. As a result, in most areas, curriculums reflect employer and stakeholder needs. However, in a few cases, leaders are yet to seek, or use, the views of stakeholders and employers to inform curriculum content.

Leaders and governors understand local and regional demographics and labour market intelligence. Leaders' ambitions for curriculum growth are relevant and well aligned to meet the skills needs outlined in the Leicestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan. Leaders and managers focus closely on decreasing social disadvantage in the city and region.

Leaders work very collaboratively with other education providers across the region. The principal is part of the Tertiary Federation with other local post-16 providers. This is a valuable forum that allows leaders to collaboratively consider the provision in Leicester for young people. Leaders use the information they gather to plan courses and progression routes that are well thought out and in students' best interests.

In most cases, leaders plan adult courses that meet community or employment needs, such as language training and digital upskilling. Leaders work effectively with Leicester City Council's Neighbourhood Improvement Team. They collaborate on relevant courses to support unemployed people in the local area. Leaders work in partnership with employers to offer apprenticeships and T levels in priority sectors. This includes engineering, construction, and health and social care. Leaders successfully secure funding to provide high-quality physical resources in these areas.

Leaders involve a wide range of relevant stakeholders in students' studies. For example, students complete live projects and attend guest lectures with employers. These activities support students to develop valuable skills for their futures.

Employers and stakeholders rightly speak highly of their positive relationships with leaders and managers.

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

Leaders and managers prioritise developing the skills of teachers and staff. They offer comprehensive continuous professional development that mostly targets any areas for development managers identify. Teachers benefit from the training they complete. It has a positive impact on the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment that students and apprentices receive.

Managers and teachers mostly plan the order they teach subjects and the content of them well. For example, ESOL teachers on entry level 2 courses start with a recap of the grammar taught at entry level 1. After this, they introduce new topics that rely on this understanding, such as the present perfect simple. Level 5 operations and departmental manager apprentices first learn the fundamentals of leadership and management. They then study subjects that bring these principles together, such as project management. These approaches enable students and apprentices to progressively build their knowledge and skills in a logical way.

In a small number of cases, managers and teachers do not plan their curriculums as effectively. For example, functional mathematics managers plan to reinforce topics that students have previously studied when they teach new ones. Unfortunately, in too many cases, students do not have enough knowledge of the topics they have studied before. This means that they struggle to grasp the new knowledge they are taught. A few teachers of learners with high needs do not always plan well enough how they will develop students' English and mathematical skills.

Teachers have considerable knowledge of their subjects and use this well to teach the curriculum. For example, access to health teachers combine their extensive subject and industry knowledge to teach topics in a contextualised way. This helps students to gain good insight into scenarios they may encounter. Level 3 immersive design and development students are taught through a collaboration between teachers and employers from the National Space Centre. As a result, students develop cutting-edge industry skills that they apply in a working visitor attraction.

In lessons, most teachers help students and apprentices to understand key concepts through well-planned and clearly delivered activities. T-level childcare teachers give students suitable opportunities to discuss and reflect on their learning. They skilfully link classroom activities to work placements. This allows students to contextualise what they learn. On short courses for adult job seekers, teachers design presentations that are clear and do not overwhelm students. In a few cases, teachers are less skilled in planning or producing appropriate activities. For example,

a few level 2 computing teachers introduce too many concepts simultaneously. These students find it hard to focus and consequently struggle to understand what they are doing.

Most teachers check students' and apprentices' understanding of current topics, as well as their recall of previous topics, well. If students are unsure of the answers, teachers adjust their approaches to help them understand. A small minority of teachers are less skilled in their use of assessment. For example, teachers pose questions and do not wait for an answer, or they ask generic questions. These teachers move on to new material before they know whether students or apprentices understand what they have been taught.

In the very large majority of cases, teachers encourage students and apprentices to use subject-specific, professional and academic vocabulary well. Teachers make use of glossaries to help students remember and appropriately use technical terms. For example, adults on access health courses remember and use key vocabulary when they recall different types of tissue in the body.

Teachers make appropriate adjustments for students and apprentices with SEND. For example, they provide students with coloured overlays or use adaptive technology. Teachers are proactive in identifying the possible needs of new students with SEND and arranging support for them.

In most subjects, students and apprentices develop at least the expected levels of new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, high needs learners on employment courses develop a wide range of skills in team building, communication, patience, and organisation. Early in their studies, plumbing and heating apprentices confidently identify which piping to use in a range of situations.

Most students, adults and learners with high needs pass their courses. This is not, however, always the case. In the last academic year, for example, on a few T-level courses and on beauty therapy level 2, too many learners left their courses early. In the case of childcare T levels, this was because they started childcare apprenticeships. Achievements at level 2 functional mathematics were too low, with almost two thirds of students failing to achieve. The large majority of apprentices achieve their courses.

Most young students receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. They benefit from individual advice from qualified careers advisors. However, a small number of adults and apprentices do not benefit from enough information about their career options.

Leaders and managers have appropriate processes to oversee the quality of students' and apprentices' experiences. They use a range of effective activities to review the quality of teaching and learning. They accurately identify their strengths and areas for development. Increasing attendance is a key priority for leaders, and they have a range of relevant actions to improve it. However, it is too soon for inspectors to judge the full impact these initiatives may have.

Governors have the relevant experience to undertake their roles. Most governors visit the college at least every half term. During these visits, they undertake joint learning walks and meet with students and staff. They gather information first hand about what it is like to study and work at the college. Governors triangulate what leaders tell them and know the college well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve attendance for students on education programmes for young people.
- Ensure all learners with high needs have appropriately challenging targets.
- Support the few teachers who need help to improve their curriculum planning, use of activities in class and assessment approaches.
- Improve achievement rates on functional skills mathematics and retention rates on the few courses where it is too low.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131863
Address	Welford Road Leicester Leicestershire LE2 7LW
Contact number	01162242000
Website	https://leicestercollege.ac.uk/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Verity Hancock
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	5 to 8 December 2017
Main subcontractors	The National Space Centre

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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