

Inspection of Kendal College

Inspection dates:

10 to 13 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Kendal College is a small general further education college located in Kendal, Cumbria. The college provides a range of vocational, academic and higher education courses, as well as apprenticeships. Kendal College has three sites in Kendal. These are the Milnthorpe Road campus, the Arts and Media campus and the Westmorland campus. Arts and media courses are offered at the Arts and Media campus. Nearly all other curriculum areas are based at the Milnthorpe Road campus. At the time of the inspection, the Westmorland Campus had not fully opened but offered a small number of professional studies courses such as accountancy.

At the time of the inspection, Kendal College had around 1,300 learners on education programmes for young people studying a range of academic and vocational courses at levels 1 to 3 including T levels, BTECs and A levels. The largest subject areas are performing arts and media, construction, sport, and health and science. Around one in 10 learners follow T-level courses in business, agriculture, engineering and health. A-level learners follow courses in humanities, social sciences, science and mathematics.

Around 730 adult learners study courses at levels 1 to 3. Most of these study part-time courses such as English, mathematics, education and creative arts. Just under

a sixth study full-time on vocational courses, such as automotive. The remainder study access to higher education courses in science, health and humanities.

There are 73 learners with high needs. Ten learners are enrolled on supported internships and 14 learners study a level 1 course that is intended to develop their independence, skills for work, English, mathematics and communication skills. The remainder study on full-time academic and vocational courses at levels 1 to 3. The college works with a specialist subcontractor to support the placement element of its supported internships.

Around 800 apprentices study at levels 2 to 5. Most are on apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 studying areas such as construction, engineering, business, education and agriculture. The remainder study at levels 4 and 5 in management, education or human resources.

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

Learners are well motivated and committed to their learning. They attend regularly and benefit from a positive and respectful culture where staff know and care about them. However, too many learners and apprentices do not receive a high-quality education.

Learners benefit from calm and respectful environments in classrooms, workshops, studios and nearly all communal areas at each campus. Learners at the Arts and Media campus value the opportunity to work closely and professionally with other learners on dramatic and musical performances. Nearly all learners support one another with care and consideration.

In too many areas, learners on education programmes for young people do not retain sufficiently detailed knowledge that they have learned. Tutors do not ensure that level 3 animal management learners revisit knowledge about biology from earlier in their course. Consequently, these learners have difficulty recalling key knowledge in preparation for more difficult concepts.

In the better courses in education programmes for young people, learners develop valuable new knowledge and skills quickly. For example, level 2 professional cookery learners learn how to combine apples, pastry and sauce precisely to make an apple pie. Health learners who study the T level understand the importance of completing home risk assessments and care plans before discharging patients from hospital. These learners grow in confidence quickly as they progress through their course.

Most adult learners know and can do more because of their learning. For example, level 2 early years practitioner learners at the Westmorland campus distinguish quickly between the roles of educational psychologist and occupational therapist in educational settings. Access to higher education learners in policing and criminology use academic referencing confidently when they write essays. As a result, most adult learners progress quickly to higher education courses or employment.

Too many apprentices do not benefit from enough opportunities to apply what they learn at work. For example, in the level 3 livestock unit technician apprenticeship, over half of employers are not aware of what apprentices learn during their training and cannot provide opportunities for apprentices to practise their skills. Consequently, these apprentices' application of new skills in the workplace is too slow.

Learners with high needs on level 1 vocational studies do not benefit from teaching that is tailored effectively to their learning needs. Leaders, managers and tutors do not make sufficient use of the educational targets in their education, health and care plans to create individually tailored programmes. Tutors do not consider learners' starting points well enough and too often teach topics that are not at an appropriate level for the learner. These learners do not develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to move on to their next steps quickly enough.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at college and know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They are confident that staff challenge bullying, harassment and discrimination immediately and know how to report any concerns they may have. Level 3 performing arts learners undertake risk assessments before performances to maintain a safe environment on stage.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work with employers and other stakeholders effectively to identify, understand and contribute to meeting local and regional skills needs. Where stakeholders identify gaps in the college's provision, leaders consider carefully how they can fill them themselves or by collaborating with other educational providers in the region. However, leaders do not involve employers and other stakeholders sufficiently in the design and teaching of a few courses.

Leaders collaborate well with the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce to understand and respond to the skills and employment needs they have outlined in the local skills improvement plan. For example, leaders have responded quickly to employment needs in hospitality by developing the 'Simon Rogan Academy' with an international restaurant business based in the Lake District. This provides training for a range of roles within fine dining establishments, including commis chef, head chef and front-of-house staff.

Leaders work effectively with the other three general further education colleges in Cumbria to plan and coordinate the courses they offer to meet the needs of their local communities. For example, leaders responded quickly to the closure of the county's agricultural college. They have taken over the apprenticeships in this sector, launched a T level in agriculture and offer short courses such as certification for sheep dipping that local farmers value highly.

Leaders and managers work appropriately with stakeholders in the community to meet skills needs. For example, they work in close partnership with Kendal's Torchlight community festival to provide performing arts learners with street theatre workshops and the opportunity to perform roles in the festival.

Leaders and managers work with a range of charities, employers and other stakeholders to ensure that they influence the content and teaching of nearly all courses. In a few cases, managers do not involve stakeholders in the planning of courses sufficiently. Leaders plan to improve their engagement with stakeholders in these areas, but it is too early to see the impact.

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

Leaders and managers plan the order of topics in most courses effectively so that learners master the fundamentals before moving on to more complex topics. For

example, young learners studying GCSE English gain confidence in writing creatively before writing articles and letters. Adult learners studying access to criminology initially learn about the basic theories in criminology before applying these to later units on mental health and social influence. Consequently, most learners build their confidence as they learn.

In too many courses for younger learners at the Milnthorpe Road campus, tutors do not check sufficiently that learners understand what they have taught them before moving on to the next activity. For example, tutors do not check A-level psychology learners' planning of essays before they provide them with an example answer. These learners have difficulty applying new learning.

Where teaching is effective, well-qualified and experienced tutors help learners to understand new theories and ideas quickly. For example, level 3 performing arts learners demonstrate their understanding of theories of voice projection and pitch by applying them to warm-up exercises in class before they perform. Consequently, these learners develop their understanding of how to improve their voice swiftly.

Too many tutors do not provide learners and apprentices with feedback that shows them clearly what they need to do to improve their work. This means that too many learners and apprentices are unable to rectify mistakes or make improvements quickly.

Where feedback is effective, tutors show learners what they need to do to improve their work swiftly. For example, level 2 professional cookery tutors provide learners with a sheet after each meal service that identifies what they have done well and what they need to improve. As a result, these learners develop their skills quickly.

Leaders provide adult programmes that enable learners to improve their skills and prospects for educational progression. Access to higher education learners in humanities prepare effectively for higher education courses by learning how to use written English effectively in academic essays. Most learners progress successfully on to degrees and degree apprenticeships.

Staff adapt their support effectively to meet the needs of learners with high needs on academic and vocational courses and on supported internships. Teaching and support staff work closely together and share information about learners effectively. Support staff help learners who struggle to take notes and develop flash cards for learners who find it difficult to retain information. As a result, these learners with high needs remember what they have learned and progress at least as well as their peers, including on to paid employment.

Well-qualified careers staff work effectively with staff, employers and other stakeholders to ensure that nearly all learners benefit from helpful careers education, information, advice and guidance. Staff organise an annual careers fair and invite industry experts and local higher education institutions to provide learners with useful information on their next steps.

Learners benefit from many opportunities to take part in rewarding enrichment opportunities in addition to their studies. For example, learners send delegates to the Cumbrian Youth Parliament, they organise the annual college prom and join clubs such as the tap-dancing club. Learners with high needs volunteer with a local charity that uses surplus food to feed families in need. Many younger learners and a few adult learners and apprentices participate in these activities.

Leaders do not make effective use of quality improvement processes and systems to bring about sustained improvements swiftly. In too many cases, their actions have not brought about the improvement in the quality of education that they expected. Consequently, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive.

Experienced and well-qualified governors support and challenge leaders appropriately. They receive useful reports and use these to challenge leaders where they have made improvements too slowly. However, they have not been effective in ensuring that leaders improve the quality of provision swiftly. The impact of leaders' actions remains too slow.

Leaders have implemented appropriate measures to check on the quality of the work carried out by its subcontractor with supported interns in a local hospital. Managers visit the workplace regularly to check on supported interns' progress in their job placement and the quality of support they receive from the subcontractor's job coaches. As a result, they can assure themselves that supported interns progress at the same rate in all parts of their programme.

Leaders manage the workloads and well-being of staff carefully. Staff value the measures leaders have put in place to manage the workloads of tutors teaching large groups. However, a few staff still feel their workload is too heavy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve quality assurance processes to accurately identify weaknesses in the quality of education and put actions in place to rectify them swiftly.
- Improve the planning and teaching of the curriculums for learners on education programmes for young people, particularly on A-level courses.
- Provide all learners and apprentices with constructive feedback that tells them what they need to do to improve their work.
- Work closer with employers to coordinate apprentices' training at college with the skills they are learning in the workplace.
- Plan teaching effectively to meet the needs of learners with high needs enrolled on level 1 vocational studies.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130631
Address	Milnthorpe Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 5AY
Contact number	01539 814700
Website	www.kendal.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Kelvin Nash
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	6 to 9 June 2017
Main subcontractors	Right2Work C.I.C

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal – education and standards, 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

David Towsey, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Alison Humphreys	His Majesty’s Inspector
Angus Forsyth	Ofsted Inspector
Gail Yeadon	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Higginson	Ofsted Inspector
Sonia Stirling	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Kelly	His Majesty’s Inspector
Michelle Brabner	Ofsted Inspector
Maura Cummins	Ofsted Inspector
Ceri Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Kim Bleasdale	His Majesty’s Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023