

Inspection of Birmingham Metropolitan College

Inspection dates: 24 to 27 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
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	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) is a large general further education college with three main sites across the West Midlands.

The Matthew Boulton campus is in Birmingham City Centre. From this campus, leaders offer vocational education programmes for young people (EPYP), apprenticeships and courses for learners with high needs. They also offer adult learning courses, which include access to higher education (HE). The Sutton Coldfield campus is the only site that teaches A levels. At this campus, learners and apprentices study a range of vocational qualifications, T levels, apprenticeships and adult learning courses. The James Watt campus is in Perry Barr. Leaders at this campus focus on technical vocational training. They offer vocational EPYP, T levels, apprenticeships and adult learning programmes. The Erdington Skills Centre is part of the James Watt campus. At this site, learners study a range of work-based learning programmes. Learners also study horticulture at Birmingham Botanical Gardens. All campuses teach English and mathematics programmes.

At the time of the inspection, 4,725 learners were studying EPYP. Leaders provide over 19 A levels, four T levels and over 100 vocational and technical courses from entry level up to level 3. Most vocational technical courses are at level 3. Subjects include art and design, business, climate change, early years, engineering, esports, fashion, health and social care, sport, travel and tourism, and uniformed services. There were 116 learners with high needs. Leaders provide foundation learning courses from entry level up to level 2, including vocational studies, life and living skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

At the time of the inspection 2,916 adult learners studied at BMet. Leaders provide eight access to HE courses, six-week long community courses including digital, almost 100 part-time courses including bookkeeping and accounting, work skills and various vocational technical courses. Leaders also offer university-level courses, including foundation degrees.

At the time of the inspection, around 736 apprentices studied at BMet. Leaders offer over 30 apprenticeships from level 2 up to level 6. Most apprentices are aged 19 and above. Two-thirds of apprentices study level 3 apprenticeships. Most of these apprentices study the level 3 engineering technician apprenticeship and the level 3 dental nurse apprenticeship. The level 2 pharmacy services assistant apprenticeship is the largest area of study for level 2 apprentices. Apprentices studying levels 4 to 6 mainly study the level 6 control technical support engineer or the level 6 manufacturing engineer.

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

Learners and apprentices find college campuses to be safe and respectful environments, which are inclusive and welcoming. Leaders and managers have created a culture that promotes diversity and inclusivity. Leaders underpin this with the widely understood 'ready, respect, safe' code of conduct. Staff encourage learners and apprentices to be tolerant of different views. Consequently, learners and apprentices are respectful and polite to their peers, teachers and visitors.

Learners and apprentices, learn in well-resourced, high-quality and industry-standard classrooms and workshops. Learners with high needs have access to quiet zones and multi-sensory facilities. However, in a minority of adult ESOL lessons at the Matthew Boulton campus, classrooms are too cramped. Learners across the different campuses enjoy a range of inviting recreational facilities that are clean and tidy.

Many learners and apprentices do not successfully learn about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Most teachers provide information on a range of topics such as radicalisation and extremism in tutorial programmes. However, too few learners and apprentices can recall this information or know how to relate it to their own lives. As a result, learners are not sufficiently aware of the potential risks posed in their local areas or how these could affect their daily lives.

Most learners' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good across the college. Learners are positive about their learning experience. They engage in learning enthusiastically, listen intently and respond successfully to teachers' instructions. When learners encounter concerns, they are confident to express their worries to teachers and managers. Teachers and learners have positive and respectful relationships. Most learners develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours successfully. However, a small minority of learners who study level 3 business management at the Matthew Boulton campus are not supported effectively. They do not receive the help needed to acquire the knowledge and skills that are essential to passing their assignments. Because of this, many of these learners feel their teaching is not effective and they are not learning.

Adult learners demonstrate maturity and enthusiasm. They keenly participate in session activities such as role play. Adult learners on access to HE programmes develop confidence, communication skills and digital skills throughout their programmes of study. Teachers set high expectations which reinforce attendance and punctuality. Because of this, learners rapidly develop the skills required to progress into employment or their next steps in learning. Leaders and managers have adjusted start times to classes to enable learners with carer responsibilities to drop children at school. Learners value the diverse environment that leaders have created.

Most apprentices have a positive attitude to their learning. Apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful at work. For example, level 3 engineering technician apprentices undertake additional qualifications in

programmable logic controllers to develop the knowledge and skills they need for work. Apprentices learn about equality and diversity and apply these values successfully. Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns they may have. They value the requirement to wear lanyards in college and are respectful of college security staff.

Learners with high needs are positive about their learning experience. They display positive behaviours in classrooms and are respectful of each other and teachers. Learners attend termly celebration events where teachers recognise their achievements. They are genuinely pleased for each other's successes and are proud of their own accomplishments. Learners with high needs achieve and progress in line with their peers. They have access to a broad range of enrichment activities, for example cooking, singing and gardening groups, to support the development of their socialisation skills. They have a good understanding of how to recognise a toxic relationship. They participate in college life and attend learner forums where leaders take their views seriously.

Learners and apprentices say they feel safe. They know who to go to if they have a concern.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders involve employers and stakeholders effectively in the design and implementation of many curriculum areas. They collaborate successfully to ensure that learners and apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for future success in education or work. For example, in foundation learning, learners work on community action projects to develop their communication, creativity and teamwork skills. However, this is not yet consistent across all curriculum areas. Leaders have introduced new 'employer boards' across the college, but it is too early to see the impact of these. As a result, a few learners do not yet benefit from a curriculum that helps them develop the knowledge and skills needed to achieve their future ambitions.

Leaders engage with a broad range of stakeholders to understand the skills needs of the local region and national economy. They are active members of several strategic boards. Through their collaboration, they know the key local priority skill areas. They are proactive in creating networks and links to address local skills needs. For example, leaders collaborate closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority. Because of this collaboration, leaders adjusted the ESOL curriculum to offer vocational pathways for learners. As a result, ESOL learners develop the knowledge and skills needed to apply for jobs in key priority sectors such as digital and business.

Leaders use information and intelligence from stakeholder network groups effectively. Leaders host an established professional services academy. Through this academy, leaders partner with local businesses and professional bodies. They meet

regularly to understand the changing needs of the sector. This partnership supports curriculum planning and the implementation of activities, for example professional development opportunities for staff, expert curriculum talks, workshops, work experience placements and curriculum reviews.

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

Leaders and managers sequence the curriculums successfully. They ensure that learners and apprentices build their knowledge and skills incrementally over time. For example, level 2 pharmacy apprentices initially learn about person-centred care before progressing to logging prescriptions and preparing medication. EPYP learners on level 3 computing develop computational thinking. They apply this learning later in the programme to the construction of algorithms. On the level 3 engineering technician, apprentices initially develop hand skills such as milling and lathe operating skills. They then move on to more complex learning in topics such as pneumatics and hydraulics. As a result, learners and apprentices secure learning in their long-term memory.

Many teachers do not use the starting points of learners and apprentices effectively to plan teaching. For example, in level 3 health and social care EPYP and level 3 engineering technician apprenticeship, learners and apprentices undertake assessments of their initial knowledge and skills. However, teachers do not use the information taken from these assessments successfully to inform their teaching. Because of this, many learners and apprentices follow the same generic learning plan and do not progress at the rate at which they are capable.

Most teachers are appropriately qualified and have high levels of industry experience. Many teachers use their knowledge and expertise skilfully in lessons to bring learning to life. For example, adult learners on rail programmes benefit from trainers who use anecdotes and real-life examples of incidents or issues that have occurred on the rail network. In the level 1 multi-skill EPYP, teachers present theory effectively using real work situations. This enables learners to successfully link theory with practice. Consequently, learners develop a deeper understanding of the topics they are studying.

Many teachers do not routinely provide feedback that helps learners and apprentices improve. In a few curriculum areas, such as digital T levels, learners benefit from detailed and helpful feedback. However, for others, feedback does not provide information that helps learners and apprentices achieve their potential. For example, in some A level programmes, feedback comments are often too brief. Teachers do not set specific actions for learners to complete. As a result, learners are not aware of the changes they need to make, or how to improve.

Teachers in vocational areas support learners with additional learning needs effectively. Teachers work closely with the inclusive support team to plan successful teaching strategies. These strategies include breaking tasks down into manageable chunks, allowing learners extra time and encouraging learners to communicate with

others. As a result, most learners with additional learning support needs progress at the same rate as their peers.

Most teachers use a range of effective teaching strategies to help learners and apprentices learn. For example, in level 3 computing, teachers use a range of questioning techniques and break learning into structured chunks to help deepen their understanding. In level 3 dental nurse, teachers provide clear explanations that enable apprentices to grasp new concepts quickly. They skilfully combine learning with work. As a result, many learners and apprentices make the appropriate progress.

Learners and many apprentices produce high standards of work and recognise the knowledge and skills they have learned. For example, apprentices in level 3 engineering produce work to an industrial standard. Learners in ESOL recognise their progress in areas such as pronunciation and being able to write formal letters. In level 3 business management, many EPYP learners can describe management styles and apply these to case studies successfully.

Most learners on vocational courses achieve their qualifications and progress towards further study or work. Where this is not the case, in areas such as EPYP, A levels and the level 3 electrical installation apprenticeship, leaders have taken appropriate action to reduce the decline in achievements. However, it is too early to see the impact of their actions.

Leaders do not ensure that most learners and apprentices routinely receive the information they need to prepare for their next steps in education or work. Adult learners, foundation learners and learners with high needs do receive the valuable information they need to be successful. However, for others, the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance about potential next steps is not consistent. Too few learners and apprentices understand the opportunities available to them at the end of their studies and the actions they need to take to be successful.

Governors are confident and constructive in their engagement with the executive team. They are aware of the college's weaknesses and support leaders' actions to rectify these. They receive clear information through a governor dashboard. They use this information confidently to scrutinise the actions and impact of senior leaders. Governors verify the information presented to them. They regularly meet with learners and undertake campus-based learning visits with college staff. This provides them with a good understanding of the college's curriculum. As a result, they provide valuable support and critical challenges. These actions have helped the college to make the improvements needed.

Leaders have implemented effective subcontracting arrangements to ensure a high-quality provision. They maintain close oversight and undertake detailed scrutiny of all subcontractor work through robust quality assurance and monitoring arrangements. Managers successfully hold subcontractors to account for their performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Feedback must routinely help learners and apprentices meet their potential.
- All learners and apprentices must follow a curriculum that provides them with the opportunities to develop personal interests, learn to become resilient, confident, and active citizens and provides them with the information they need to stay safe.
- Learners and apprentices must receive appropriate information that helps them to identify their next steps and which supports them.
- Teachers must use the starting points of learners and apprentices to inform teaching.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130466
Address	Jennens Road Birmingham West Midlands B4 7PS
Contact number	01214 464545
Website	www.BMet.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Pat Carvalho
Provider type	General Further Education College
Date of previous inspection	7 to 10 December 2021
Main subcontractors	City of Birmingham Basketball club The Albion Foundation Aston Villa Women's Football Club Skern Lodge University Hospital Birmingham Skills Network

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal for curriculum and quality, as the 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.

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