

Inspection of TEC Partnership

Inspection dates:

26 to 29 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
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

TEC Partnership is a very large group of further education and skills institutions in the Yorkshire and Humber region and Lincolnshire. The partnership is made up of Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, East Riding College, with campuses in Beverley and Bridlington, Scarborough TEC, Skegness TEC, Modal Training in Grimsby, and National Employer Training in Grimsby, which delivers short employability courses to adult learners. In addition, the provider has community learning centres in Louth, Hull and Immingham.

At the time of the inspection, there were 4,218 learners on education programmes for young people, including T levels and the T-level foundation year and full-time provision for learners aged 14 to 16 years. There were 1,345 learners on adult learning programmes, including skills bootcamps in food manufacturing management and heavy goods vehicle driving. There were 850 apprentices across a range of apprenticeship standards and 216 learners with high needs on specialist and vocational pathways.

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

Most learners and apprentices enjoy the education and training that they receive at TEC Partnership. They appreciate the harmonious and welcoming atmosphere at each campus and the high level of respect shown by teaching and support staff. On skills bootcamp programmes, for example, tutors create an environment in which adult learners are confident to exchange ideas that are relevant to their workplaces. Tutors encourage them to explore these ideas with their peers, who listen respectfully.

Leaders and staff place a high priority on ensuring that learners and apprentices attend well. Learners and apprentices understand the importance of having good attendance and punctuality. Most attend well and arrive on time for their lessons. When attendance falls below expectations, learners and apprentices benefit from well-considered personalised support strategies and interventions to help them engage with their studies.

Learners and apprentices study and train in high-quality learning environments. Plumbing apprentices are provided with new boilers and industry-standard equipment, such as air source heat pumps, which they use to practise and refine their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Learners on the level 3 forensic science course work on simulated crime scenes that enable them to apply their knowledge of criminology and work to solving mock cases. These resources help bring learning to life and support learners and apprentices to understand the practices that they need to be familiar with as they progress to further learning and into work.

Learners and apprentices who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from individualised support that helps them to study effectively and to make progress in line with their peers. For example, younger learners at Skegness TEC on level 1 vehicle maintenance programmes receive effective support from learning advocates who assess their needs and assist their tutors with planning activities that help learners with their studies.

Most learners and apprentices participate in well-planned and coordinated extra-curricular activities. Many take part in skills-based competitions which help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of high-quality professional working standards in different industries. For example, apprentices have recently been successful in a prestigious hair-colouring competition.

Learners and apprentices study a well-planned tutorial programme. Staff teach them about the importance of adhering to British values, such as the rule of law. As a result, learners and apprentices know how they can contribute positively to society. On the T-level foundation year, learners develop a good understanding about what makes a positive member of society. They learn the importance of being respectful, treating people equally and ensuring that individual rights are upheld. Learners recognise the importance of British values when supporting someone they are caring for.

Most learners and apprentices are provided with appropriate careers information and guidance that helps them to know about career routes and what they need to do to take their next steps into further and higher education and into employment. However, on a few courses, adult learners are not clearly signposted to the jobs that they could apply for on completion of their course. For example, on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), staff do not focus sufficiently on supporting adult learners to identify routes into employment.

Too many learners on vocational education programmes for young people do not benefit from support in accessing suitable work experience placements. For example, on the level 3 T level in digital production, plans to provide learners with work experience have been too slow to materialise, and too many learners are yet to experience a work placement.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers work successfully with civic stakeholders and regional employers to influence local and regional skills policy. The curriculum offer in the different geographical areas that the partnership serves relates well to local skills improvement plans and reflects the needs of local and regional economies across Yorkshire, the Humber and Lincolnshire. Leaders and managers work very well with other education providers, such as schools, academies and further education providers, to share information about their provision and collectively design new programmes to meet area needs. As a result, they contribute fully to ensuring that provision across the areas in which they work responds well to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and staff ensure that, in most curriculum areas, employers and other stakeholders are sufficiently involved in the design and implementation of the curriculum. For example, a national renewable green energy company based in Grimsby leads on an annual classroom-based wind shore project which level 2 and level 3 engineering learners undertake, producing operations and maintenance schedules for a local wind farm. Learners use this valuable experience when applying for apprenticeships with the company as it gives them a competitive edge compared with other applicants. However, in a few other curriculum areas, employers and stakeholders are unaware of the opportunities available for them to contribute to the further enrichment of the curriculum.

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

Leaders have recently developed a renewed vision and carried out a restructure of the organisation with the aim of developing a standardised and efficient partnership approach to their operation. This includes approaches to quality assurance, safeguarding and business support functions. However, too many of the actions that they have taken to achieve this have not been implemented rapidly or effectively enough. Too many staff are uncertain about the reasons for the changes or what will

happen next, and many express dissatisfaction with the approach that leaders are taking.

Across all campuses, teaching and support staff work hard to ensure that learners and apprentices receive a good quality of education. However, too many staff report that their workload is very heavy, and that this has a negative impact on their well-being and their ability to manage their work. Teachers and managers are keen to undertake industrial updating to maintain their professional knowledge and currency. However, they are often unable to carry out this training because of heavy schedules, having to cover teaching vacancies and high workloads.

Leaders and managers select learning and training programmes that are relevant to the communities, employers, businesses, learners and apprentices in the regions that they serve. Each strand of provision successfully develops the skills and knowledge that learners and apprentices need to be successful in their future careers. For example, the adult curriculum offer has been developed to include skills bootcamps in the food manufacturing industries, where employers need their staff to have a secure understanding of food safety and quality. The partnership works with these employers to understand their business needs so that the training provided is helpful in upskilling their workforce.

Tutors and assessors are well qualified and highly experienced in their vocational sectors. Most staff have extensive experience both as teachers and as specialists in their vocational area and hold, or are working towards, relevant teaching qualifications. For example, trainers and tutors in motor vehicle engineering have held vehicle and master technician roles with large vehicle manufacturers. They use their knowledge and experience to teach learners and apprentices the fundamental aspects of motor vehicle systems. Learners and apprentices value the subject expertise of their tutors and assessors.

Most staff plan and sequence the curriculum well. They ensure that there is a logical order for learners and apprentices to acquire and consolidate their new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, construction apprentices learn the essential health and safety knowledge that they need to be able to work safely with electrical motors before they start to dismantle, repair and install them in industrial machinery. At East Riding College, learners studying the level 3 access to health and science (nursing) pathway are taught the key care principles first so that they can contribute to filling skills shortages in health services across Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire on completion of their course.

Tutors and assessors successfully use a range of teaching and assessment strategies. On the level 3 extended diploma in creative practice, tutors set research tasks for learners to help them widen their understanding of the ways in which artists approach the creative design process. They then ask learners to test out their new knowledge and practise their own interpretations of design through practical work in the studio. Learners develop mastery of differing artistic techniques and construct mood boards which reflect their developing expertise and sense of individual artistic identity. On the level 3 machining technician apprenticeship, tutors

use demonstration effectively to teach apprentices milling techniques. Apprentices then follow the instructions provided by tutors to programme machinery to make precise and accurate cuts in metal.

Most tutors and assessors use information that they receive about learners' and apprentices' starting points well to plan individual elements of learning and training. On the level 1 diploma in vehicle systems maintenance, for example, tutors test learners in their first month on their understanding of workshop health and safety and safe use of a range of tools and equipment. They then plan learning that takes into account the competency of each learner before moving on to key themes such as the use and maintenance of specialist equipment. However, in a few subjects, such as ESOL, staff do not take sufficient account of the individual needs of learners when planning the curriculum, and this delays progress for some learners.

Most tutors and assessors assess work accurately and provide learners and apprentices with useful feedback to develop their understanding. On the T-level foundation year, tutors assess learners' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of practitioners in health and social care when learners submit their assignments. They clearly identify areas where work could be improved and correct mistakes and misconceptions, including incorrect use of referencing. Learners respond positively to teachers' feedback and resubmit their assignments to the required standard.

Tutors and assessors support learners and apprentices well to develop their understanding of English and mathematics in the context of their vocational area. For example, tutors on a level 2 engineering course for learners aged 14 to 16 teach the fundamental engineering measurements that learners need to know in relation, for example, to understanding microns and industrial tolerances. Most learners and apprentices studying towards functional skills qualifications and GCSEs in English and mathematics achieve well.

Learners and apprentices produce a good standard of written and practical work. Most make good progress towards achieving their qualifications and acquire the substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful in their lives. For example, adult learners on the food manufacturing management skills bootcamp apply the new skills and knowledge that they gain in their workplace roles. Employers recognise that the new skills and knowledge that these learners bring to their organisation benefit the company in their strategy to develop their own product brands related to the food manufacturing industry.

Leaders and managers have recently introduced new approaches to identifying stronger teaching and areas where improvements are needed. However, senior leaders at group level have not resolved a few key areas of weakness such as the gaps in work experience placements for young people and the impact of unfilled teaching vacancies on staff workload. Senior leaders do not yet have sufficient oversight of the quality of education across the group.

Since the last inspection, leaders have completed a comprehensive review of governance. They have moved from a local to a group governance structure and actively recruited new governors with specific skills to fill gaps. It is too soon to see the impact of this review as most governors have only taken up their roles in the last few months.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders intend for there to be group-level management, coordination and oversight of safeguarding with the aim of achieving consistency across the partnership. They have recently appointed a group-level safeguarding lead, but plans are in their infancy and not yet fully implemented. Leaders and managers acknowledge that the information recorded about current and previous safeguarding concerns is not always recorded accurately at all campuses and that there is too much variability with safeguarding processes. As a result, inconsistencies are still apparent across the partnership sites, such as staff confusion about who reports what and to whom.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that ongoing strategic developments are implemented quickly and effectively, and are fully communicated to staff.
- Ensure that staff receive sufficient support to help them to manage their workloads.
- Ensure that the plans in place for safeguarding reporting and monitoring across the group are swiftly implemented.
- Ensure that all tutors and assessors make effective use of information about learners' and apprentices' starting points when planning learning.
- Ensure that all adult learners benefit from effective careers information and guidance to understand how to achieve their long-term career goals.
- Ensure that learners on vocational education programmes for young people benefit from effective and suitable work experience.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130585
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Website	www.tecpartnership.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Ann Hardy
Provider type	General further education college
Dates of previous inspection	17 to 20 May 2022
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the group vice-principal for curriculum quality 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

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