

# Inspection of Dudley College of Technology

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 November 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	Outstanding

## Information about this provider

Dudley College of Technology (Dudley College) is a large general further education college in Dudley, West Midlands. The college operates from several buildings across the Dudley and Brierley Hill learning quarters. The newest building is the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IoT), which opened in 2021.

Leaders offer a range of courses to learners and apprentices. For school leavers, leaders offer over 30 A levels at Dudley Sixth. They provide vocational and technical courses from entry level up to level 4, as well as T levels and T-level foundation programmes across multiple pathways. Most vocational and technical courses are from level 1 to level 3. These courses are taught across all sites, with Broadway and Dudley Evolve having the largest provision. Subjects taught include accounting, animal science, business, early years, health and social care, science, uniformed services, art and design, beauty, hairdressing, media, music, performing arts, photography, sport, travel and tourism, construction trades, building services, engineering, automotive, and digital. Leaders provide entry level and level 1 courses to learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including entry level vocational courses, independent living and supported internships.

For adult students, leaders offer a range of courses, including access to higher education (access to HE), vocational courses, short courses and flexible, modular courses in management and the creative industries. Leaders also offer sector-based work academy programmes (SWAPs) at the Black Country Skills Shop at Merry Hill. They provide courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to learners of all ages.

The college provides apprenticeships from level 2 to 5. Most apprentices study standards-based apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3. The largest numbers follow apprenticeships in installation and maintenance electrician, business administrator, team leader or supervisor, plumbing and domestic heating technician, and carpentry and joinery.

At the time of the inspection, just over 4,880 learners were studying education programmes for young people, with 1,228 studying programmes at entry level or level 1, 1,092 at level 2, and 2,561 at level 3 or above. There were 2,016 learners on adult learning programmes studying from entry level to level 5, and 1,418 apprentices following apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5. There were 175 learners for whom the college receives high needs funding. Leaders subcontract a small proportion of their apprenticeships to two providers, who offer specialist provision in sport and leisure, and network cable installation. The college does not have Skills Bootcamps.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy studying at Dudley College. Most would recommend the college to friends and peers. Learners and apprentices feel welcome and well supported. They demonstrate a very positive attitude to their learning. Learners and apprentices value the new knowledge and skills that they learn. They are interested in their studies and keen to develop. Learners have clear aspirations for their next steps into further education, training, higher education or employment.

Learners and apprentices develop the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that prepare them for their next steps. Although most learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications and achievement has improved recently, achievement rates for apprentices and on a few adult courses and education programmes for young people are too low. Most learners and apprentices, including those with high needs, move on to their intended next steps, including further education, higher education or gaining more responsibility in the workplace.

Learners and apprentices are respectful of their peers, teachers and the public. They benefit from a culture of inclusivity and mutual support. Apprentices' behaviour and conduct mirror the expectations of their employers. Team leader apprentices quickly develop the skills and professional behaviours they need to be successful at work. They become confident team leaders, adapting their behaviours to deal effectively with new challenges at work.

Learners and apprentices are motivated and take pride in their work. They build their confidence, resilience and character quickly. They learn to self-reflect and become more self-assured, taking on wider responsibilities and using their own initiative. Teachers create a calm environment in which learners work in a focused and diligent manner. Learners are attentive in class and participate confidently in group work and question-and-answer sessions. A-level learners describe how they have developed skills such as analysing language and its effects on the reader. Most learners and apprentices produce work of a good standard.

Learners benefit from a broad curriculum that prepares them for the world of work as considerate and respectful members of society. Learners and apprentices participate in a wide range of enrichment activities linked to their curriculums, next steps or wider talents and interests. This includes sports teams, student union (SU) trips, visits and guest speakers. The SU offers activities to increase political literacy, as well as physical and mental welfare. This helps learners and apprentices to develop high levels of self-confidence and character.

Most learners and apprentices attend well. Leaders prioritise attendance and punctuality as part of learners' and apprentices' readiness for next steps and employment. They monitor, track and intervene to improve attendance rates should learners fail to meet expectations. However, attendance for a few young learners in GCSE English and mathematics sessions is too low. Learners are not always punctual, meaning that some lessons are slow to start or start with filler activities that lack purpose.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns they may have. They talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe physically, mentally and online. Learners explain about keeping their digital footprint private, the dangers and prevalence of cyber-crime and online grooming, as well as the potential threat of radicalisation and extremism. Learners and apprentices find tutors and teachers approachable and say that, should they have any concerns about their safety, they would be listened to and helped.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the skills needs in the Black Country. They work collaboratively with stakeholders, such as the local authority, on a range of projects. This includes training for long-term unemployed residents in Dudley, programmes for 14- to 16-year-olds who are not engaged in education, and rebuilding new college facilities. Leaders focus provision in their new buildings on the sectors most in need in the Black Country. This includes dedicated buildings for manufacturing and engineering, the Black Country and Marches IoT, service industries and arts, and current plans for a new healthcare training facility in partnership with a local university. The local authority and other stakeholders are highly complimentary about the college.

Leaders plan training effectively with employers to meet their skills needs. They provide specialised training in higher-level skills in engineering manufacturing such as robotics and automation. Leaders have developed bespoke leadership and management training for aspiring managers within the local authority to provide a talent pipeline for succession planning and promotion. Many staff have moved on to roles with higher responsibility following their courses.

Leaders work with the local community to improve the area for residents and to provide opportunities for learners to practise their skills. Learners take part in gardening and planting for Brierley Hill in Bloom. Performing arts learners perform at local museum events on occasions such as Halloween and Christmas. Animal care learners learn new skills at the local zoo, such as moving giraffes. Learners gain valuable work experience and improve their skills and self-esteem.

Leaders are highly visible in the community and work very effectively with many stakeholders for the best interests of Dudley and the surrounding area. However, in a few curriculum areas, leaders recognise that there is still more work to do to ensure that their courses are more closely aligned to industry skills requirements.

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

Leaders plan ambitious curriculums for most of their learners and apprentices. They design programmes relevant to the education and training needs of learners and apprentices, and to local and regional employment opportunities and priorities. For

example, college staff work closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority, and the NHS, to design and offer SWAPs in care, warehousing, retail, and fork-lift truck driving, which prepares adult learners for work.

Most learners and apprentices benefit from effective teaching and high expectations. Leaders create a culture of continuous improvement. Teachers are encouraged to experiment with their teaching approaches to help learners learn and remember more. On level 1 automotive, teachers consistently teach to industry standards in practical work. Learners swiftly learn why this is important for safety, efficiency and their future employability. Subcontractor teachers adapt the community activator coach curriculum to include additional qualifications, such as a level 2 certificate in coaching and a level 2 physical education and school sport qualification, that enhance apprentices' employability and skills set.

Leaders have created an effective curriculum and support structure to enable learners with high needs to progress into employment, further study and independent living. In the aspire curriculum, teachers use a three-staged approach so that learners develop skills for employment, work-based knowledge, and appropriate behaviours. When learners are work ready, they move on to supported internships that often result in paid, sustainable work. On vocational courses, education support practitioners work with curriculum teams to ensure that learners with high needs meet both their academic and preparation for adulthood targets.

Most learners and apprentices benefit from appropriate careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). Learners value the informal careers advice they receive from their teachers. Those who plan to go to university receive helpful advice on their next steps, but they are less well informed about their options for employment if they change their mind. Young learners complete a career plan. However, these plans often contain limited detail and are not always revisited. Most apprentices receive careers advice and guidance relating to sector-wide opportunities. Adult learners on the care SWAP benefit from guest speakers from the NHS who provide extensive information on the opportunities in healthcare.

Teachers are appropriately qualified, have expert subject knowledge and, in many cases, relevant industry experience. ESOL teachers successfully develop learners' understanding of life in modern Britain, drawing on local and national cultural examples. Teachers of access to HE health professionals skilfully contextualise learning to the health sector so that learners explore the history of the NHS and gain a working insight of the NHS code of conduct. Learners know the standards expected of them when working in the NHS.

Most teachers use a range of strategies to help learners and apprentices learn. They plan and adapt the curriculums logically and assess, revisit and recap key concepts to secure understanding. Teachers use questioning, presentations, coaching observations and panel interviews to assess what community activator coach apprentices recall about what they have learned. As a result, most learners and apprentices know more, remember more and can do more.

In practical lessons, teachers and assessors support learners and apprentices to practise and hone their skills. Installation and maintenance apprentices practise inspection and testing techniques on a wide range of electrical wiring systems. In beauty therapy, learners practise their new skills in a real work environment to gain valuable experience in perfecting their skills. Learners and apprentices develop their knowledge and skills effectively.

Most teachers and assessors provide feedback that supports learners and apprentices to improve their work. A-Level mathematics teachers use the same coding as the examination mark scheme relating to rigour, accuracy, and reasoning. Learners know how they achieved their marks and what they need to include to get higher marks next time.

Teachers attend teaching conferences, external training events and undertake scholarly activity. Leaders ensure that staff development focuses on teaching practice and curriculum matters, as well as learner welfare and safeguarding. Teachers benefit from support to plan and teach T-level programmes effectively. However, a few teachers do not receive sufficient vocational updating. This limits their ability to develop learners' practical skills.

Leaders maintain a sharp focus on the quality of education and training that learners and apprentices receive. They take decisive action to improve areas that do not meet their expectations. For example, on access to HE courses, leaders have reduced and streamlined the offer, provided more robust advice and guidance, set higher entry requirements and have stabilised the teaching team. This has led to significant improvement.

Leaders have a clear oversight of their subcontracted provision. They meet regularly with subcontractors to review apprentices' progress. Managers carry out quality assurance and improvement activities with subcontractor staff and share good practice. Most apprentices at the subcontractors achieve their apprenticeship. Many gain distinction grades in their final assessments.

Leaders are mindful of staff welfare and well-being. They provide staff with access to mental health support, well-being sessions and a counselling service. Most teachers feel well supported by leaders. Leaders have recently invested in innovative artificial intelligence tools to help teachers manage their workload, plan lessons and devise assessment tasks.

Governors bring a wealth of relevant experience to their roles. They provide effective oversight of the quality of education and training that learners and apprentices receive. Governors understand the college's strengths and weaknesses. They work collaboratively with senior leaders to bring about sustained improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Increase the number of apprentices who remain on programme and achieve their apprenticeship on time.
- Ensure that all learners and apprentices receive routinely planned CEIAG.
- Ensure that all teachers receive sufficient vocational updating as part of their continual professional development programme.
- Continue to improve attendance and punctuality, notably in English and mathematics, for learners on education programmes for young people.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130475
<b>Address</b>	The Broadway Dudley West Midlands DY1 4AS
<b>Contact number</b>	01384 363000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dudleycol.ac.uk">www.dudleycol.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Neil Thomas
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 and 26 January and 17 to 19 May 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Sport Structures Education CIC CNET Training Limited



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal 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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