

Inspection of Myerscough College

Inspection dates:

7 to 10 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Myerscough College is a specialist further education college focusing on land-based, science, engineering and sports courses. The college's main campus is the Bilsborrow campus in Preston. Most young people study at the Bilsborrow campus on a range of courses such as animal management, agriculture, equine, horticulture, sport, engineering and motorsports. The college has a further six centres across Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside: Croxteth Park Liverpool, Ullswater Community College, Witton Park Blackburn, Walton Hall Park Warrington and Emirates Old Trafford, Manchester.

At the time of the inspection, Myerscough provides education programmes for 1,771 young people who study vocational programmes from entry level to level 3. Leaders provide training for young people at Ullswater Community College in agriculture, animal management and animal care. The Croxteth, Blackburn and Warrington sites provide programmes in animal management and animal care. The Croxteth site also offers subjects in equine management, horticulture and arboriculture.

Currently there are 463 adult students that are based mainly at the Croxteth site. These students study horticulture, English, mathematics multiply programmes and

industry courses, such as mowing and pesticide control. A few students study access to higher education land-based science at both Croxteth and Bilsborrow sites.

There are 820 apprentices following apprenticeship standards from level 2 to 5, of which 256 are aged 16 to 18. Most apprentices study courses at levels 2 and 3 with the highest enrolments in golf greenkeeping, horticulture and landscape operative, farriery, sports turf operative, veterinary nursing and land-based engineer.

There are 323 students for whom the college receives high needs funding. Leaders offer courses at entry and level 1 in skills for working life, employability, public services, sport and motor vehicle.

Myerscough work with four subcontractors. Three of the subcontractors provide training for students on education programmes for young people. At the time of the inspection, only one of these subcontractors, Groundworks, were providing training to seven students. The remaining subcontractor provides training on the level 3 rail technician apprenticeship.

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

Most students and apprentices improve their confidence and resilience because of the training they receive. For example, sports students on basketball and rugby academy programmes learn how to deal effectively with the setbacks they may experience in becoming professional sportspeople.

Students' attendance across many programmes for young people and adult access to higher education courses is too low. When students and apprentices do attend lessons, they are keen to learn. Teachers at the Croxteth site follow up non-attendance swiftly and work with community leaders to provide support to re-engage students who fail to attend.

Staff ensure that students participate in competitions, projects and sporting events. Motorsport students attend rally clubs and landscape apprentices compete in world skills competitions. Sports students officiate at high-profile events, both nationally and internationally, which include basketball and rugby competitions. Students initiate and nurture relationships with sector professionals and develop industry specific skills that prepare them well for their next steps.

Students on education programmes for young people do not benefit from ambitious curriculums. Teachers do not consider information that they receive on what students already know and can do, or their intended destinations, when planning curriculums. Consequently, all level 3 students are enrolled on to one-year programmes instead of the two-year programmes that they were expecting to study. Too many level 3 students leave upon completion of the one-year course.

Students with high needs are respectful and supportive of each other. They value the inclusive culture at the college. Students receive high-quality pastoral support and access a diverse well-being programme. For example, they attend sessions on sexual health, mindfulness and stress awareness. Students feel confident and comfortable talking to staff and their peers about these topics.

Adult horticulture students benefit from an inclusive and supportive culture. Teachers know their students well and are sensitive to their needs and aspirations. They demonstrate to students the value of working outdoors and the positive impact this has on their health and well-being. Students have strong peer-to-peer support systems. They share resources and revision tips and support each other on gardening projects. Students take pride in their work and achieve their qualifications.

Apprentices develop valuable knowledge and practical skills that prepares them effectively for their chosen career and allows them to make a positive contribution to their employers' businesses. The horticulture curriculum includes first aid and practical competence certificates for the use of pesticides. Veterinary nurse apprentices develop their communication skills and confidence in managing difficult situations when in the veterinary practice.

Leaders have invested significantly in industry standard technology to prepare students and apprentices for future skills needs. Students and apprentices benefit from learning how to use a range of resources such as robotic milking machines and automated feeding machines. Students and apprentices understand how they can become more efficient in their future work and support the community to become more sustainable.

Students and apprentices feel safe across all the college sites. They are aware of who to report any concerns to and say that staff deal with incidents and concerns swiftly. Apprentices understand how to keep themselves safe when using complex machinery and tools and know what to do if they encounter discrimination or bullying at work. In tutorial lessons, students discuss a range of topics such as healthy relationships and staying safe online. Students speak positively about the student support and welfare centre where they feel comfortable to talk to members of staff and seek support.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work closely with stakeholders to identify the priority skills needs locally, regionally and nationally. Staff take an active role in sector-based groups such as the British and International Golf Greenkeeping Association, the National Farmers Union, and Landex. They use information from these groups to develop programmes that meet national skills shortages and the needs of the local communities. For example, leaders took an active role on the trailblazer group that designed the golf greenkeeping apprenticeship standard. They continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that the curriculums remain current and meets the needs of golf clubs both nationally and internationally.

Leaders have strong links with local authorities and mayoral combined authorities. For example, leaders work with the Liverpool city region to provide training for adults at the Croxteth site, on a variety of land-based courses such as horticulture and arboriculture. This helps adults enter the job market or take up volunteering opportunities in these sectors to support their continued progression.

Leaders work effectively with employers from across the Lancashire and Cumbria regions. They are proactive in ensuring that the curriculums are developed to provide students and apprentices with the future skills they require. Leaders support local communities by demonstrating new technologies that will enable them to become more sustainable in the future and how to diversify their income streams. Leaders attend technical advisory boards where they use the expertise of employers to inform most of the curriculums. For example, they work with employers in motorsport to include environmental factors in the curriculum. Employers such as Genus and Innovis advise on the inclusion of breeding and genetics in the agriculture-based curriculums. However, leaders do not involve stakeholders or employers sufficiently in the planning, design and implementation of a small minority of programmes that are not land-based.

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

Most teachers plan curriculums in a logical order to enable students and apprentices to incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Farmworker apprentices learn about health and safety before moving onto biosecurity measures. Apprentices apply this knowledge when cleaning the farm and the machinery to ensure the prevention of disease. However, on access to higher education, teachers' planning of study skills, word processing and project writing is not effective. Students work independently with limited checks on progress by teachers. This results in students producing work that is not fully developed and contains too many errors.

Most teachers do not use information gathered on students with high needs or young peoples' starting points to effectively plan their lessons. Students on the level 3 rugby academy programme are oversupported and rely heavily on 'help' sheets that are too prescriptive. Level 3 equine students research the range of advanced horseshoes without gaining sufficient knowledge of recognising basic horseshoes. Teachers of students with high needs do not use information gathered about students' needs to successfully plan adaptations for students in the classroom. In too many instances, activities planned are not fully accessible by all students. As a result, students on entry level qualifications find it difficult to keep up with the sessions or do not understand what is being taught.

Teachers of learners with high needs do not use education health care plans (EHCPs) to inform target setting or to plan learning. Targets that are set by tutors are too broad and do not always develop the wider skills such as independence or communication. As a result, students do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Most teachers provide frequent opportunities for students and apprentices to practise and develop their skills through discussion and group activities. Basketball academy students examine health questionnaires and identify why these should be written accurately. Equine students work in groups to plan events; they understand the different business stages involved in the planning of an equine event such as budgeting and marketing. Horticulture students develop their skills on 'pricking out' before practising pruning roses.

Most teachers use effective questioning to check learning and rectify misconceptions. Teachers use skilful questioning to enable vet nursing apprentices to confidently discuss the skeletal system and identify the mandible bones in a variety of animals. Animal care students accurately define an ethogram; teachers support students to discuss how an ethogram helps to identify health problems in animals. Teachers complete follow-up activities to improve technical language such as written assessments and group discussions. As a result, most students and apprentices can remember and recall subject specific terminology in future learning.

Most students and apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills well. Golf greenkeeping apprentices take moisture readings and analyse and interpret the data. They use this information to monitor turf health and identify turf disorders and diseases. Farmworker apprentices use their mathematical skills when producing the food mix for livestock. They use ratios to ensure the food mix has the correct food and supplements that the different livestock require.

Too many teachers on education programmes for young people do not use assessment well enough. This results in students not receiving useful feedback to improve their work. Students on the basketball academy programme, do not develop their academic writing skills such as academic referencing. Students on level 3 agriculture and level 3 rugby academy programmes do not improve their written work. This means that students repeat the same mistakes and do not improve their English skills. However adult horticulture teachers check students understanding effectively. They routinely set low-stakes quizzes and tests and use effective questioning to gauge students understanding of what has been taught. Students on these programmes benefit from effective feedback that helps them to improve their practical skills.

Most students and apprentices benefit from well-planned careers education, information, advice and guidance. Students and apprentices attend industry specific careers fairs, careers talks and events where guest speakers explain their career journey. However, students on a few courses such as sports programmes, do not receive helpful advice about what they might progress on to if they are not successful in becoming a professional sports person.

Apprentices achieve their apprenticeship with most achieving the highest grades available. The majority of apprentices continue in employment with a few gaining additional responsibilities. Most students with high needs progress onto higher level study. However, the achievement of young people and adults on access to higher education land-based science is too low.

Teaching staff are appropriately qualified with relevant vocational expertise. Staff maintain their vocational currency through membership of professional bodies and attendance at trade shows and conferences. Teachers use this expertise effectively in the classroom. For example, agriculture teachers explain changes to irrigation to improve sustainability. As a result, students learn new techniques to prepare them for their chosen industry.

Leaders have a clear oversight of the subcontracted provision. They meet regularly with subcontractor staff to discuss the progress of students and carry out observations of the teaching team. Staff at the subcontractors speak highly of the support they receive from leaders at the college.

Leaders have accurately identified most of the strengths and areas for improvement in their self-assessment. They have put actions in place to rectify these weaknesses. However, these actions have not been effective in bringing about rapid

improvements. The quality of education that students receive is inconsistent across programmes.

Governors have appropriate expertise and experience to carry out their roles. They understand most of the strengths and areas for improvement. They receive useful reports that enable them to provide support and challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account. However, governors do not ensure that these improvements are swift enough.

Leaders do not ensure that staff workload is manageable. Too many staff report that workload is not considered and at times is unmanageable. They feel that this has been increased due to staff shortages. However, a few staff feel supported by their managers. Staff access the college's counselling services and make use of flexible working patterns.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Put appropriate actions in place to ensure that students attend their classes regularly, so that they achieve their qualifications.
- Improve feedback following assessment on programmes for young people, so that students know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Review the curriculums and use the starting points for students with high needs and those on education programmes for young people to ensure they are ambitious.
- Strengthen quality assurance and improvement processes to rapidly improve the quality of education that students receive.
- Improve the use of EHCPs and targets for students with high needs to ensure they develop their wider skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130743
Address	St Michael's Road Bilsborrow Preston Lancashire PR3 0RY
Contact number	01995 642222
Website	www.myerscough.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Wes Johnson
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	3 June 2013
Main subcontractors	Siemens Groundwork Employability Solutions Pinehirst

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of quality, 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 students’ work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider’s documentation and records.

Inspection team

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