

Inspection of Huddersfield New College

Inspection dates:

27 to 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness**Good**

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

Information about this provider

Huddersfield New College is a sixth-form college located on a single site in the north of the town. The college provides a wide range of academic and vocational courses, including A levels and extended diplomas and certificates. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,248 students on programme, of whom 19 had high needs. The college is made up of six faculties: science and mathematics; health and sport; arts and media; business and information and communications technology; humanities; and social sciences. The college also provides GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics. Almost all learners are aged 16 to 18.

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

Students make positive progress from their starting points and achieve well. Most students on A-level programmes achieve their qualifications. Students on vocational programmes and GCSEs achieve at a particularly high level. Teachers work hard with students who enrol at the college with lower grades at GCSE to ensure that gaps in learning are quickly filled. This enables these students to progress well through their programmes and reach their goals.

Students benefit from a highly effective personal development 'Aspire' curriculum that supports their success in learning and life, enhances their health and well-being and supports them to develop positive relationships. This helps students to develop into self-reflecting, resilient young adults. Students also have access to a wide range of activities and experiences that go well beyond those required to meet academic expectations. A high proportion of students participate in enrichment activities, including astronomy, meditation, calligraphy, sign language and a range of sports, both for their personal enjoyment and to enhance their experiences and skills in non-academic areas. As a result, students develop their knowledge and understanding of wider society and proactively pursue their interests.

Staff develop students' knowledge of healthy relationships well. They discuss topics around consent, online safety, sexual harassment and abuse. Students demonstrate a good understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships, how to identify concerns, and strategies to stay safe and find support. They can recall what they have learned about sexual harassment and know what is not acceptable. Students are clear on the lines of reporting and are confident that any issues that they raise will be acted on swiftly and effectively.

Students are prepared very well for success in their future careers. They are coached and advised on the full range of career opportunities open to them, and many students apply to both higher education and apprenticeship programmes. In their main curriculum areas, students are exposed to useful examples of work-related materials and have the opportunity to visit universities and employers to enhance their learning and to become aware of future employment opportunities. For example, talks given by representatives from the Bank of England, high-profile employers and a range of health-related professionals contribute to students' understanding of their studies and potential career routes.

Students behave exceptionally well and display positive attitudes towards their learning. They respect the environment and are highly considerate of others. Students are very eager to learn, and they participate in their lessons well. They are confident in engaging in professional dialogue with their peers and teachers, and they develop increasing independence and responsibility for their learning. Students are supportive of their peers and work very effectively, both individually and in group work.

Students are actively involved in projects to support the local community and build their understanding of social responsibility issues affecting the lives of others. For

example, they create care packages for care homes and the homeless. During UK Parliament Week, they voted to choose a college charity for which to raise funds. Students have reclaimed some local land for tree planting and rewilding and signed up to a Green Pledge to make Britain and their local area greener.

Students' attendance is consistently high, and the very few students who are late are challenged. They understand why good attendance and punctuality are important behaviours to instil for their future success, and they arrive at their lessons prepared and ready to learn. When students are absent, staff take swift and effective action to ensure that they catch up on their work.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers liaise with a range of stakeholders to understand local and regional skills priorities. They are clear in their intent to support students to progress to higher education in readiness for future employment. Their plans for 'Curriculum 2025' look ahead to include courses matched to priorities in the local skills improvement plan, such as environmental science as a response to sustainability and green priorities.

Leaders and managers work in close partnership with other local colleges to ensure that there is a coherent offer for post-16 study in the local area. They also work effectively with schools to understand the needs of students progressing to the college and use this information well to support successful transition. They collaborate frequently with leaders in local schools, colleges and universities to share best practice and ensure that young people locally have access to an offer that supports progression towards future goals. School and college leaders appreciate this collaboration and recognise the impact that it has on supporting young people locally to achieve and progress to a positive next step.

Leaders and managers use the expertise of universities and employers to understand the skills required for students to be successful in their next stage and future employment. They develop students' work-related skills and, in most areas, subject-specific technical skills relevant to a range of careers. Across most curriculum areas, teachers work with a range of employers and other stakeholders to inform what they teach and how it is taught. They use these connections to update their industry knowledge and to ensure that curriculum content reflects current industry practice.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear and well-articulated purpose for the college, which demonstrates an understanding of the community they serve. They work collaboratively with the local further education college in the area to ensure that every student is placed on the right course at the most suitable establishment. They

mix A-level, blended and applied academic programmes of study alongside a comprehensive personal development curriculum to enrich the lives of their students and develop aspirational, well-rounded individuals.

Leaders and managers are extremely clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the college, including the quality of teaching and assessment. Over the last year, they have accurately identified areas that need to improve and have quickly made significant improvements that are sustainable and are already having a beneficial impact on students. For example, leaders now work closely with the newly created curriculum faculty leadership teams to monitor student progress effectively and to amend the curriculum where necessary. As a result, teaching standards have improved and students are already benefiting from much more effective teaching.

Leaders and managers are very ambitious for their students. Their high expectations for professional values are demonstrated through day-to-day activities. Leaders and managers have created a positive culture where staff take individual and collective responsibility to reinforce and model their high expectations for student behaviour and conduct. As a result, all staff contribute towards students becoming well-rounded and self-determined young adults.

Teachers plan and provide support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. They are aware of individual barriers to learning that may prevent these students from progressing in line with their peers, and they develop learning resources accordingly to meet these needs. For example, teachers are well aware of the strategies needed to support students with autism to help them make positive progress. As a result, students with SEND progressively develop their knowledge and skills while increasing their independence and autonomy.

Teachers sequence the curriculum effectively. Students are taught first the underpinning foundations that they need in a specific subject before teachers carefully select the next element of content to be taught. For example, in art and design, students develop first the technical skills from the use of basic life and anatomy pencil drawings before advancing to using stencil, charcoal and water colour. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they should teach and when. As such, students demonstrate confidence in their artistic abilities over time.

Most teachers apply their craft of teaching effectively. They use a range of strategies and teaching tools well to break down learning so that students can quickly learn new information and skills. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of teaching strategies, such as demonstrations and questioning, to test students' understanding. However, in a few instances, teachers do not check learners' understanding before moving on. Leaders and managers have identified this and provided teaching staff with professional training and development to update and refresh their pedagogical knowledge and skills. This is having a positive impact on courses such as A-Level mathematics and GCSE English.

Subject leaders and teachers plan a programme of work-related activities to extend and broaden students' knowledge and experience of the world of work. However, as leaders rightly acknowledge, students following blended programmes that include both A-level and vocational courses only have limited opportunities to carry out work experience placements.

Teachers successfully develop students' independent learning skills, such as research skills, higher-level written skills and self-evaluation. They use a range of revision techniques that help most students to recall their learning and apply it in their examined assignments. However, a few students do not acquire the skills of revision well enough to help them to work independently.

Leaders provide very effective support for staff, including those new to the college and early career teachers, by providing effective staff development. They use information gathered through quality assurance activities to identify staff training needs accurately. All staff are provided with weekly, purposeful and professional development opportunities that focus on their subject specialism and the craft of teaching, enabling them to continue to improve their teaching skills. They learn from others by, for example, engaging in frequent professional dialogue with other teachers about their performance and practice.

Leaders and managers are considerate of staff workload and well-being. They are aware of the pressures on their staff and work to create an enjoyable place to work. Staff feel well supported by their managers and speak positively about working at the college. Leaders and managers have implemented changes such as dedicated time for staff to access onsite counselling if required. In line with the college's well-being strategy, all staff have access to a wide range of external support for personal and professional issues through an 'employee assistance' programme.

Governance is effective. The newly appointed governors are very committed to the college's improvement strategy and have high aspirations for the college. Governors have a wealth of relevant experience, and the newly elected chair has a strong understanding of education and safeguarding. Governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development, and they challenge leaders effectively to make improvements where needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Continue to provide supportive professional training to enhance the quality of teaching, particularly in areas where further improvement is needed.
- Ensure that all students acquire the independent study skills needed to consolidate their learning and recall key content quickly and securely.

- Ensure that students on blended programmes have sufficient work experience opportunities to help them to prepare fully for the world of work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130539
Address	New Hey Road Huddersfield HD3 4GL
Contact number	01484 652341
Website	www.huddnewcoll.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Marcus Smith-Connor
Provider type	Sixth form college
Date of previous inspection	12 to 15 April 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant 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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