

Inspection of Loughborough College

Inspection dates:

7 to 10 November 2023

Overall effectiveness**Good**

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

Information about this provider

Loughborough College is a large general further education college that provides both further and higher-education courses. Most courses are taught at a single campus in Leicestershire. A small number of adult learners study at nearby community venues, and there are apprentices throughout England.

Around three quarters of the college's further education funding is for education programmes for young people. At the time of the inspection, there were just over 4,000 young learners at the college. The college offers an array of vocational courses from level 1 to level 3, including a number of T levels. It also has a large sixth form, offering a broad range of A levels.

The college offers a small selection of courses for adult learners. At the time of the inspection, there were around 500 learners studying courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English, mathematics, access to higher education and a small number of vocational courses in early years, adult care, beauty therapy, accountancy and counselling.

The college provides a wide range of apprenticeship courses. At the time of the inspection, there were around 800 apprentices, of whom 330 were aged 16 to 18 years. Apprentices study courses from level 2 to level 6 in a broad range of subjects.

At the time of the inspection, the college had 86 learners with high needs. Around a quarter of these learners were enrolled on specialist courses. The remainder were participating in a range of vocational and academic courses.

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

Most learners and apprentices enjoy their studies and are more than satisfied with the standard of their education and training. In particular, learners value the quality of teaching, the quality of resources and the level of individual support they receive.

In most cases, learners and apprentices benefit from well-planned courses that reflect the needs of local, regional and national employers. They enjoy being taught by teachers who have excellent subject knowledge and well-honed teaching skills. Most teachers make meaningful links between course topics and workplace practice, and this helps learners to develop their subject understanding and their work readiness.

Learners benefit from an inclusive and welcoming environment in which they have room to thrive. Learners, including those with high needs, feel able to participate in, and make contributions to, their lessons and the wider activities of the college, regardless of such things as disability or age.

Learners are well motivated and positive about their studies. They attend well and participate fully in lessons. Many learners participate in activities that go beyond the basics of attendance and study, including skills competitions, additional projects, and activities such as volunteering and charity work.

A large majority of learners develop the skills and knowledge they need for their next steps, and they achieve their qualifications. In most subjects, learners produce work that meets or exceeds the standards expected at the level they are studying. They grow in confidence as a result.

Learners feel safe. They know with whom they should raise any concerns and are confident that staff will deal with problems quickly and appropriately. They value the visibility of staff across the campus.

Young learners benefit from a well-planned professional, academic and personal development programme, which is pervasive across their courses. They encounter topics through tutorials, guest speakers, and enrichment activities, especially sports. This programme helps young learners to develop their understanding of a range of themes related to health and well-being, and to broaden their understanding of the world. Many learners undertake courses that combine elite sports training with academic or vocational studies in highly ambitious curriculums. Young learners also benefit from thorough and helpful careers guidance.

Adult learners value and benefit from the excellent support that they receive from college staff. For example, teachers recognise the challenges that learners who are asylum seekers and who study ESOL face, such as the pressures caused by living for long periods in hotel accommodation. College staff have strong and well-established partnerships with community groups and local schools and use these relationships to help learners to become socially integrated.

Most college staff work closely with employers to coordinate all elements of apprentices' studies and to tailor courses to their specific needs. Most apprentices benefit from well-planned courses in which they are explicitly taught the skills and knowledge they need for their next steps. However, a small number of apprenticeships lack clear course planning, and this means that a few apprentices must rely on their colleagues or their own independent research to acquire knowledge and skills. Most trainer-assessors prepare apprentices well for their final assessments. However, a small number of apprentices are not sure about how they can achieve high grades.

Most teachers and support assistants have a clear understanding of the specific requirements of learners with high needs. Consequently, most learners benefit from learning programmes that are tailored to their individual requirements. Staff successfully support learners with high needs to develop their independence. A very large majority of learners achieve their targets and take positive next steps into paid and voluntary work, as well as higher-level courses. However, a minority of teachers do not plan well enough, are not aware of learners' specific needs and do not adapt their teaching sufficiently. In these instances, learners make slower progress.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers have a clear and well-defined vision for Loughborough College: to provide education and training that is underpinned by a good understanding of the local, regional and national demand for skills. They engage very well with a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, local authorities, borough councils and education partners, and this helps them to understand and plan for the skills priorities. For example, leaders and managers at the college have active roles at East Midlands Chamber of Commerce and the Local Skills Accountability Board, which gives them insight into current strategic developments and future needs. In addition, they have a productive partnership with the University of Loughborough, and they have played a pivotal role in a partnership between local colleges and universities to develop a new institute of technology to support employers.

Leaders and managers understand the work needed to contribute effectively to meeting skills needs in the local area and the region. Consequently, they ensure that, in the large majority of subject areas, employers and stakeholders are involved effectively in the design and implementation of the curriculum. For example, sports staff work closely with England Handball to incorporate topics about officiating and handball coaching. They also work with Leicester City Football Club to support the development of elite players. Employers and stakeholders also support the college by providing guest speakers, work experience placements, resources, workplace visits, and live assignment briefs. In a small number of curriculum areas, stakeholders take a particularly active role. For example, in space engineering, college staff work closely with staff from the National Space Centre, who have co-produced the curriculum and share its teaching with college staff. However, in a few

curriculum areas, employers and other stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in course design.

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

Most managers and teachers plan courses well. They select the content of the curriculum carefully so that it helps learners and apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to their future study and career plans. For example, managers include a topic on mathematics for nursing in the curriculum for access to higher education courses. This supports learners' progression into higher education.

Most teachers and trainer-assessors develop well-sequenced teaching plans that help learners and apprentices to build their skills and knowledge over time. They plan carefully to revisit topics over the duration of courses to reinforce and consolidate learning. This helps most learners and apprentices to make good progress. However, on a small number of apprenticeship courses, staff do not plan in sufficient detail what apprentices will learn, or when and how they will learn it.

Most staff identify learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities quickly. The large majority of teachers make suitable adjustments to their teaching for these learners. However, teachers of foundation courses for learners with high needs do not always make the best use of information they have about learners to develop individualised learning plans for them.

Teachers and trainer-assessors provide clear explanations and demonstrations of concepts and practical skills. They break down complex activities into smaller components to help learners and apprentices develop their knowledge and understanding of key concepts. They frequently provide well-written materials to give further clarity and insight to learners.

Teachers and trainer-assessors ensure that learners use correct terminology and professional language within written work and during lesson activities. As a result, learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of complex terminology, which they are able to apply confidently and correctly.

In a vast majority of cases, teachers and trainer-assessors make good use of assessment to check learners' and apprentices' understanding and to help them to incorporate knowledge into their long-term memories. They provide helpful, encouraging, and developmental feedback to enable learners and apprentices to improve the standard of their work. However, they do not always ensure that learners act on this feedback, and this slows the progress of a few.

Most teachers and trainer-assessors set work that is appropriately challenging for learners and apprentices. Learners and apprentices respond positively to this and often produce work that goes well beyond the expected standard. As a result, they

develop their knowledge and skills in depth and are well prepared for their final assessments, in which the large majority are successful.

Managers establish clear expectations for the conduct of learners and apprentices, which staff reinforce in lessons. On the rare occasions when the behaviour of learners or apprentices disrupts the learning of others, teachers and trainer-assessors challenge them well. This leads to a calm and purposeful learning environment, in which learners and apprentices, including those with high needs, feel comfortable when asking questions or getting things wrong.

Staff monitor learners' and apprentices' attendance closely. When they have concerns, they raise them quickly and provide learners and apprentices with effective support. Where support actions fail to raise attendance, they make appropriate use of the college's disciplinary processes to rectify matters. This contributes to the high attendance of learners.

Teachers and trainer-assessors help learners and apprentices to develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values and how these apply to them in their everyday lives. Learners learn how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremist views. These topics help to prepare learners well for life in modern British society.

Most learners benefit from a well-structured programme that includes age-appropriate information on general well-being, healthy relationships, healthy lifestyles, and sexual health. Many learners participate in activities, such as sports, that promote healthy levels of activity.

Most learners receive appropriate careers guidance that helps them to plan their next steps. However, in a few cases, trainer-assessors do not help apprentices to fully understand the wider careers pathways open to them when it would be appropriate to do so.

Leaders and managers develop and implement a range of well-considered quality improvement processes. These include review weeks, lesson observations, learning walks, self-assessment, quality improvement planning and performance scorecards. In most cases, these activities identify the correct areas for development, which leaders resolve quickly. However, in a very small number of cases, leaders do not identify the areas of development precisely enough, and this makes it difficult for them to accurately plan for improvement.

Leaders' quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are effective. Managers, working with subcontracted partners, undertake a range of useful activities that include frequent meetings, contract reviews and quality assurance visits.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff can access frequent and relevant professional training. Teaching and training staff benefit from access to a team of advanced practitioners, which provides useful coaching and development support to

those who need it. Leaders are very committed to providing staff with opportunities for further study, industry updating and external training. Staff rightly value the training that they receive.

Governors have the relevant backgrounds and experience that they need to support the leadership team. They undertake a comprehensive range of training and development, which helps them to understand their roles and responsibilities well. They receive detailed information from leaders on a broad range of indicators related to the quality of education and other key areas such as safeguarding and the quality of careers guidance. Governors use this information effectively to challenge leaders on the progress they make with any identified areas for improvement.

Leaders and governors focus closely on ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality physical resources. They successfully secure investment and funding that allows them to continue to improve the college environment for the benefit of learners and apprentices.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that curriculum plans for all apprenticeship programmes clearly identify the material to be learned and the ways in which it will be taught.
- Ensure that all learners with high needs benefit from individualised learning plans that address their personal development needs.
- Ensure that all apprentices have access to appropriate careers information, advice and guidance.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130748
Address	Radmoor Road Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3BT
Contact number	01509215831
Website	www.loucoll.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jo Maher
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	23 to 26 May 2017
Main subcontractors	Balfour Beatty Utility Solutions Limited Huddersfield Giants Community Trust Limited NSSC Operations Limited The Skills Network Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, curriculum delivery and 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 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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