

Inspection of Craven College

Inspection dates:

27 February to 1 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Good
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 learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Craven College is a general further education college in North Yorkshire. It has two campuses in Skipton, the Aireville campus and the Auction Mart campus, which houses many of the land-based courses. There are two other centres, the Aviation Academy at Leeds Bradford Airport and Evolve in Ripon, for learners with high needs. The college provides a range of learning programmes for adults in community locations in North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,267 learners on education programmes for young people, including 54 learners on A-level programmes, 495 adult learners and 487 apprentices. There were 111 learners with high needs, of whom 45 were on specialist provision. The college subcontracts to the Adult Learning Centre in Batley to provide teaching assistant programmes to 16 adult learners.

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

Too many learners on study programmes do not attend well enough. Leaders have rightly focused their attention on improving learners' attendance, including increased monitoring and swifter follow-up calls when learners do not attend. However, these measures are yet to have a sustained impact. Where leaders have uncovered the root cause of low attendance on a few specific programmes, such as aviation, they implemented specific actions which have resulted in much improved attendance on these programmes.

Learners who attend frequently and apprentices benefit from learning in high-quality facilities. They learn in realistic, industry-standard environments on their campus, including an equine arena. Many learners also experience the environments in which they aspire to be employed. For example, learners on arboriculture skills bootcamps study in a local forest and learners on the aviation and travel and tourism courses study at Leeds Bradford Airport.

Learners and apprentices feel welcome in the college and appreciate the calm and inclusive environment. They value the team of pastoral care experts who are there when they need them, including progress coaches and mental health specialists. Teachers nurture their learners and apprentices and get to know them as individuals.

Learners on vocational study programmes benefit from a curriculum which is specifically focused on the industry that they wish to enter. Learners on A-level courses are prepared well for future higher-level study, such as learning how to critically evaluate. Most learners on study programmes who complete their programmes achieve their qualifications, with around a fifth of learners achieving highly. However, in a few subjects, such as level 2 animal care, the proportion of learners who achieve is too low. Most learners progress to positive destinations, including further education and training, apprenticeships and employment.

Adult learners study on programmes which help them to move towards their goals, such as employment in horticulture or self-employment as dog groomers. Leaders provide a valuable curriculum for adult learners and provide courses to attract those furthest from education. Most adult learners achieve their qualifications and progress into further education or employment.

Apprentices train in sectors where leaders have strong relationships with employers, such as land-based and construction. Employers value the communication with the apprenticeship staff, including at valuable reviews where they discuss apprentices' progress. Apprentices are prepared well for their end-point assessments and most complete their apprenticeships successfully, with many gaining high grades. Almost all apprentices remain in skilled employment following their apprenticeship.

Learners with high needs on specialist programmes benefit from well-rounded programmes designed to prepare them for independence in life and education. Learners at the Evolve centre enjoy specialist facilities where they develop a range

of skills for independent living, such as cooking and ironing. Most complete their courses successfully and, where appropriate, gain qualifications. Learners with high needs on vocational programmes make progress in line with their peers.

Leaders and managers provide a wide curriculum which broadens the development of learners and apprentices for now and the future. Sessions and resources cover a range of age-appropriate information including healthy relationships and consent, internet safety, substance abuse, mental health and finance and budgeting. Learners and apprentices grow in confidence during their programmes and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a limited contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have written a strategy to develop the curriculum to meet skills needs across the region. However, the implementation of this has not yet started. Leaders are in the early stages of developing a responsive strategy based on their use of local market intelligence and understanding of the regions they serve. In a few curriculum areas, such as agriculture, they have established relationships with key stakeholders and focus the curriculum in these areas on meeting skills needs. For example, leaders have recently introduced skills bootcamps in arboriculture for adult learners who want to work in this important rural industry.

Managers and teachers in most curriculum areas involve stakeholders successfully in both the design and implementation of the curriculum. For example, in aviation they work closely with stakeholders from Leeds Bradford airport, Swissport and Jet2.com to co-design the curriculum, provide guest speakers and provide experiences for learners in the wider airport setting. In construction, teachers add stonework into the bricklaying curriculum for apprentices in response to the local need for this skill in the region. In a few subjects, discussions with stakeholders are still in their infancy, such as plans to include gamekeeping and estate management in the animal management curriculum.

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

Over the last five years, there has been significant turbulence in the leadership of the college. The current senior leadership team, appointed within the last 18 months, has established stability and identified a clear path to make necessary improvements. Leaders have taken substantial steps in improving the quality of education across the provision. However, they recognise that their strategic and cultural changes have not fully permeated throughout the organisation.

Leaders rightly recognise the need to focus their curriculum fully on meeting the needs of the communities that they serve, including those in the large rural area surrounding the college. They have recently developed a new strategic plan which

they intend to implement very soon and which outlines how they will refocus the curriculum to make it more coherent and responsive to local needs.

Experienced and astute governors bring valuable skills to the college board, including in education, finance and local government. They have been instrumental in holding leaders to account and have taken decisive action over the last 18 months to protect the college during a time of turbulence. They provide continuous support and challenge to leaders, asking shrewd and pertinent questions as new processes are embedded and ensuring that agreed strategic goals remain in clear sight.

Leaders carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their provision and strategically plan where to target their efforts for improvement. This is particularly successful in the subjects that they have prioritised, such as aviation and health and social care. They have replicated this model for improvement across other subjects, although it is too early to see the full impact.

Leaders have recently bolstered the rigour of their quality procedures, including effective oversight of their subcontracted provision. This includes reviews of curriculum areas, visits to sessions to observe teaching and analysis of learners' and apprentices' work. They meet with managers frequently to review information from these activities, setting realistic targets for improvement and ensuring that actions are fully implemented.

Leaders provide relevant training and developmental activity for teachers, which is tailored to teachers' individual needs. Advanced practitioners use their expertise to provide coaching and mentoring for teachers to develop their craft in the classroom. Teachers keep up to date with changes in their industries. For example, teachers in art visit local galleries and speak with employers in a range of fields such as knitwear and film and animation to understand better the skills that learners need to prepare for their next steps.

Staff across the college work hard to ensure that learners and apprentices receive a good quality of education. This includes providing additional catch-up sessions for learners and apprentices who do not attend. However, too many teachers report concerns about their workload, which they feel may not be sustainable long-term. Leaders are taking steps to understand better the pressures on their teachers. For example, they have recently instigated a working party with involvement from the recognised teaching union.

Experienced and well-qualified teachers plan the curriculum logically. They carefully assess learners' and apprentices' starting points and use this information to adapt their teaching. Early in their programme, learners in animal care learn about climate change, pollution and habitat loss, and then apply this knowledge to the impact of these issues on wildlife ecology in specific areas of North Yorkshire. Learners and apprentices build their knowledge and skills gradually through their programmes.

Teachers provide clear and helpful information at the beginning of programmes to help learners and apprentices understand the content and structure of each course.

Leaders have recently improved this guidance in subjects where there were high numbers of learners leaving their programmes early, and this has resulted in more learners remaining on programme. For example, teachers in equine studies ensure that prospective learners understand that the curriculum consists of more than learning to ride horses.

Teachers use a wide range of effective strategies in their teaching. They use their industry experience bring learning to life. For example, teachers training adult learners to be nail technicians discuss commercial timings in salons. In aviation, teachers skilfully question learners about the different restrictions relating to domestic and international flights. Most learners and apprentices participate well in their lessons, are keen to learn and take pride in their work. They develop professional behaviours, which prepares them well for future education and careers.

Teachers use assessment well to check learners' and apprentices' understanding and provide helpful feedback. Learners and apprentices use this well to make improvements. Most learners and apprentices produce work of suitable quality for their level of study. For example, learners in health and social care are observed and receive feedback on practical tasks such as measuring blood pressure, taking blood and giving CPR on the mannequin in the simulated hospital ward.

Most learners on study programmes, including those with high needs, take part in meaningful work experience which is relevant to their career aspirations. Afterwards, they reflect on their experience and gain valuable feedback from the employers about the skills that they developed while on the placement. However, in a few instances, learners carry out work experience which is not linked to their career goals.

Most teachers develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills effectively. For example, in construction, apprentices use mathematics to calculate ratios for mixing mortar. In specialist provision for learners with high needs, teachers use songs to help learners develop their English skills. For learners and apprentices who need to achieve English and mathematics qualifications, those who attend gain valuable knowledge over time and grow in confidence, which prepares them well for their examinations.

Learners and apprentices benefit from helpful careers advice from their teachers and careers specialists in the college. Teachers often invite guest speakers to talk about working in different sectors. Learners and apprentices are prepared well for their next steps, and many have clear plans for their future careers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Maintain the momentum of rapid improvement across all curriculum areas.
- Rapidly improve learners' attendance on study programmes.
- Ensure that strategic developments are planned and implemented quickly and effectively, and are fully communicated to staff.
- Ensure that staff receive effective support to enable them to manage their workloads

Provider details

Unique reference number	130591
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Website	www.craven-college.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Anita Lall
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	16 to 19 January 2018
Main subcontractors	The Adult Learning Centre

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the interim assistant principal 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 learners' and apprentices' work, seeking the views of learners, apprentices, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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