

Inspection of Leeds College of Building

Inspection dates:

5 to 8 March 2024

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

Leeds College of Building provides courses and apprenticeship programmes specifically for the construction and built environment industries. The college has two sites in Leeds, the North Street campus and the South Bank campus.

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,180 students aged 16 to 19 studying on full-time study programmes from entry level to level 3, including the T-level foundation year and full T level in design, surveying and planning for construction. There were 2,717 apprentices enrolled across the full range of construction and built environment subjects from level 2 to level 6. There were 414 adult students enrolled on programmes that provide training to help secure employment or progression to further study, including in subjects such as painting, decorating and plumbing. There were 72 students with high needs.

Leaders currently work with 11 subcontractors that provide apprenticeships on their behalf. They have recently taken the decision to cease subcontracting once current arrangements have come to an end.

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

Teachers create a calm and welcoming classroom environment for apprentices and students that is conducive to learning. Students who attend contribute enthusiastically to lessons and consistently display respect towards each other and their teachers. They understand expectations and arrive well prepared for lessons.

Students' attendance on study programmes is too low, and too many students do not arrive at their lessons punctually, either first thing in the morning or when returning from breaks. As a result, too many students miss teaching and, as a result, are not making the progress of which they are capable. Leaders and managers have implemented a series of actions to improve attendance, and although there are early indications of improvement, attendance is still not high enough. Apprentices and most adult students attend well and are punctual to classes.

Most students and apprentices are well motivated and demonstrate good attitudes to their studies. For example, electrical installation and maintenance apprentices participate enthusiastically in classes and work collaboratively to discuss and agree solutions and answers that help them prepare for formal assessments. In GCSE English, students participate fully in lesson activities and respond well to questions.

Apprentices and students feel safe. They benefit from a personal development programme in which they learn what to do if they face bullying or harassment. Students can describe local risks such as knife crime and the risks of radicalisation. Staff place a high priority on compliance and adherence to health and safety in workshops and laboratories.

Leaders and managers provide students and apprentices with opportunities to participate in additional activities such as skills competitions. For example, over the last three years apprentices in bricklaying have gained awards in both Skills Build and the Guild of Bricklayers. As a result, students and apprentices experience success beyond the curriculum.

Teachers and progress coaches support students and apprentices to develop their confidence and resilience, and their knowledge about how to keep mentally and physically healthy. This includes how to identify toxic relationships, domestic violence and what a healthy relationship looks like. For example, level 1 plastering students start their lessons with a 'today's talk' task which includes discussion about promoting mental and physical well-being, such as through having breaks and taking exercise. As a result, students are aware of key factors that help them to stay mentally and physically healthy.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders engage with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that their curriculum responds to local, regional and national skills needs within the construction and the built environment sector. They contribute to the green skills agenda in their curriculum planning, clearly considering the priorities and themes identified in the West Yorkshire local skills improvement plan, such as net zero transition, sustainability and digitisation. Staff work closely with employers and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to revise existing apprenticeship standards to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to develop new standards.

Leaders work well with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. They have successfully trained adults under the 'skills connect' initiative in construction crafts and green skills. Leaders take an active role in the Leeds Learning Alliance to ensure that students across the city understand the opportunities in the construction industry, particularly those from the most deprived communities. Leaders have formed a strong partnership with the Joseph Aspdin Skills Trust, a small local charity, resulting in over 1,300 students attending additional lessons in climate change and green skills.

Most staff engage well with employers in the design and implementation of the curriculum. For example, on the level 3 transport planning technician apprenticeship, staff carefully plan and sequence the curriculum to meet employers' needs. However, in a few instances, employers do not have the opportunity to be as involved as they would like to be in the design and implementation of the curriculum for their apprentices.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the programmes that they offer. Programmes are designed to meet the needs of the construction industry locally, regionally and nationally, with skills shortages in mind. Leaders and managers show a high level of commitment to providing a curriculum which meets the needs of students who typically would not take part in training or work.

Leaders plan their courses in a logical and well-considered order. For example, students on the T level construction, design surveying and planning course first learn about the science behind building design and how to make accurate and appropriate measurements before they learn how appropriate design links into building regulations and standards. Level 3 installation and maintenance technician apprentices are taught essential health and safety skills to ensure that they are safe to work on site before moving onto electrical science topics such as how to calculate voltage drop. This helps students and apprentices to build their knowledge and skills in small steps throughout the course.

Leaders and managers do not have effective enough oversight of how well apprentices are progressing. For example, they do not monitor well enough the progress of apprentices who need to achieve English and mathematics qualifications

in order to proceed to their end-point assessment. Curriculum managers and heads of department do not have clear enough information about apprentices' progress to allow for useful interventions which could improve apprentices' chances of success.

Leaders and managers have in place appropriate processes to evaluate the quality of the provision. However, actions for improvement identified through these processes are not followed up, so leaders and managers cannot be assured that they have been implemented and cannot fully measure the impact. Leaders have recently increased the size of the quality assurance team to address this.

Leaders manage their subcontracted provision well. They carry out a stringent due diligence process and ensure that provision meets identified needs. Leaders have in place comprehensive contracts with subcontractors which include key performance indicators to assure leaders that the quality of the provision is at a high level and apprentices are highly likely to achieve.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced in the construction sector. They are time-served electricians, plasterers, architects, joiners and specialists in a variety of other trades. Students benefit from the wide range of subject-specific knowledge and expertise that their teachers hold. Most teachers have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. However, a few teachers of students with high needs have not received appropriate training on working with this cohort of students. Leaders recognise this and have planned action to address it.

Leaders do not provide enough work experience opportunities for students on study programmes, particularly students on level 1 courses. This means that these many students have insufficient opportunity to gain insights into the world of work. Most adult students benefit from meaningful work experience. Those studying painting and decorating gain experience within the college by decorating classrooms and other spaces. They provide quotations and give time estimates to the estates team to simulate a real-work environment. This helps them to develop their skills for future employment.

Leaders and managers provide students and apprentices with appropriate careers advice to help them to make decisions about their next steps. For example, apprentices on installation and maintenance electrician programmes know that they can progress to other jobs such as a tester or designer. They are aware of the additional qualifications that they must take to access these jobs. Students on the T level foundation programme are aware of apprenticeships and alternative courses if progression to the T level is not their preferred option. As a result, most students and apprentices are clear about what they want to do next and the steps that they need to take to get there.

Most teachers present information clearly and concisely to help students and apprentices understand key information. For example, on civil engineering apprenticeships, teachers explain the key differences between the description of soil types and their classification. They encourage apprentices to use the correct terminology concerning granular and cohesive soil types.

Staff do not set precise enough targets for students with high needs. This means that programmes for these students are not sufficiently personalised to enable them to make swift progress towards the long term goals in their education, health and care plans. As result, too many students are making slow progress. Students with high needs receive good, well-informed support from their teachers to help them to understand how to manage their social and emotional reactions to college life.

The programmes that they follow enable most students and apprentices to learn valuable new knowledge and skills. Those who remain until the end of the programme are prepared well for their next steps. For example, bricklaying students learn to build walls accurately in English bond method, practising their skills and gradually improving the finish and tolerance of their walls to a higher standard. Adult plastering students learn essential employability skills alongside their plastering course. For example, they learn how to set up a business, including the basics of financial management and preparing quotes for customers.

Most teachers provide helpful and constructive feedback that helps students and apprentices to understand what they have done well and how to improve their work. Apprentices and students value the feedback that they receive about the practical skills that they are developing. This helps them to improve their practical skills in line with industry expectations. However, in level 1 plumbing, too often feedback on work does not indicate clearly enough how students can improve their work further. In a few instances, spelling and grammatical errors are not corrected, which results in students continuing to make the same mistakes.

Teachers provide appropriate support for students and apprentices with special educational needs and disabilities. For example, apprentices with hearing impairments receive individualised support both in lessons and on field trips. They are provided with suitable adjustments such as subtitles where required. Students with autism are given a worklist in advance of the lesson so that they can plan and manage their approach to learning before the lesson begins.

Leaders have created a supportive and developmental culture in the college. Staff are proud to work for the college and value the efforts of leaders and managers to promote a culture of well-being.

Leaders have in place effective governance arrangements. Governors are carefully selected and recruited to bring relevant expertise to the college. They are aware of the strengths of the college and its challenges and, as a result, are able to hold the executive team to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that actions currently being taken lead to rapid improvements in attendance, punctuality and students arriving at lessons ready to learn.
- Ensure that apprentices who require English and mathematics qualifications achieve these in time to progress to end-point assessment.
- Improve the oversight of provision to gain assurance that students and apprentices are making good progress.
- Ensure that managers follow up improvement actions identified through quality assurance activities and evaluate their impact.
- Ensure that students on study programmes benefit from meaningful encounters with the world of work.
- Improve processes for target setting and measuring the progress of students with high needs to ensure that they make good progress and achieve well.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130542
Address	North Street Leeds LS2 7QT
Contact number	0113 2226000
Website	www.lcb.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Nikki Davis
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	22 to 25 October 2019
Main subcontractors	EAS Mechanical limited Salford City College Activate Learning Choice Training Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal curriculum, quality and innovation, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's 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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