

# Inspection of Hertford Regional College

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 May 2024

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

## Information about this provider

Hertford Regional College is a medium-sized, general further education college with campuses in Broxbourne and Ware. The college provides programmes for young people, adults, apprentices and learners in receipt of high needs funding. Most of the college's curriculum is offered at the Broxbourne site. At the Ware site, learners study art and design, hairdressing and beauty-based qualifications. Learners with high needs funding have access to specialist resources at the Ware campus. Approximately half of the learners in receipt of high needs funding study vocational courses at level 1 to level 3.

Most learners are recruited from Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, Epping Forest, Harlow and the London Borough of Enfield. At the time of the inspection, around 2,991 learners were enrolled on full- or part-time qualifications. Of these, 2,067 are aged 16 to 19, 924 are adults and 413 are apprentices. Over half of all apprentices are training for the level 3 installation and maintenance electrician standards-based programme. Approximately 220 learners are in receipt of high needs funding. In September 2024, the college started to offer T levels in design, surveying and planning for construction and digital production design and development.

The college works with seven subcontractors, most of which offer adult learning programmes. One of the subcontractors, CK Assessment & Training LTD, is a subsidiary of the college. It offers education programmes for young people in plumbing studies at level 1 and level 2. In addition, it offers apprenticeship programmes for gas engineering operatives. The college also offers apprenticeship programmes for plate welders and metal fabricators, through its subcontracted arrangement with Betterweld Ltd.

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

Most learners and apprentices are motivated to achieve and have a positive attitude to learning. They talk confidently about their course, what they have learned, how they have developed and what they plan to do next. Learners and apprentices develop good technical skills very quickly on their courses. They participate fully in learning, work positively with peers and teachers and are proud of their achievements. Learners and apprentices told inspectors that staff support them to be their 'true selves'.

Learners and apprentices exhibit caring and respectful behaviours. They study in very well-resourced, inclusive and calm environments. Staff understand their needs and are always willing to go the extra mile, when required, to motivate them and help them overcome barriers.

Most learners participate in social action projects to support local charities. Health and social care learners volunteer at Hertfordshire Zoo to support sustainability initiatives. Business learners undertake events to raise money for charities, such as a local hospice, the RSPCA and support for Ukraine. Learners and apprentices participate in national competitions in a range of subject areas. Consequently, learners and apprentices benefit from working in a wide network of organisations. Learners and apprentices develop the professional skills required for their careers. They have multiple opportunities to enhance their CV to support their next steps.

Adult learners and apprentices have good attendance. Young learners' attendance varies considerably and is particularly low in construction and business. Too few young learners have good attendance in English and mathematics, which continues to be below attendance in vocational lessons.

Leaders and staff promote equality of opportunity effectively. Teachers and staff know their learners and apprentices very well. Learners and apprentices value greatly the way staff accommodate their differences and needs.

Leaders and staff place a strong focus on the promotion of health and well-being to learners and apprentices. Teachers promote the importance of health effectively in lessons. Teachers include topics such as healthy eating, encourage joining clubs such as 'Pride' and promote learners' and apprentices' good understanding of the negative effects of drug and alcohol misuse.

Learners and apprentices study in a safe and secure environment. Learners have frequent and open in-class discussions around healthy relationships, sexual abuse and staying safe. As a result, learners have a mature understanding of how to stay safe. They know whom they could talk to if they should have any concerns and they are confident that staff would respond swiftly and appropriately.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a strategic ambition to become an 'anchor institution' and play a key role in the local communities and the local economy. Leaders have a good understanding of local and regional skills needs. They work extensively and highly collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders. Leaders work with local authorities, business groups, local colleges, universities and an increasing proportion of employers. Leaders sit on several local skills partnership boards. These include Broxbourne Strategic Partnership for Skills, Ambition Broxbourne and the Local Enterprise Partnership Skills Advisory Board. Leaders are members of local boards that look at changes in migration to the local area. Leaders work directly with asylum seekers to support them in returning to learning. Leaders plan their staffing requirements to ensure that they can meet the future local demand, such as in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision.

Leaders and employers have developed a highly effective curriculum for construction and art and design. Leaders work with construction stakeholders to run an annual awards ceremony, which includes 'best bricklaying tradecraft learner'. Construction employers supply the college with specialist industry-standard materials. Leaders have secured funding to become an accredited centre for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme. Consequently, construction learners can move swiftly into local employment. Art and design learners attend regular 'insight days' at a large design agency. Learners are well prepared for employment in the construction and art and design industries.

Leaders recognise that employer involvement in the co-design and teaching of the curriculum is not yet replicated across all subject areas. Leaders have set appropriate actions to further extend their work with employers and stakeholders across all sectors. Leaders and governors evaluate how the curriculum departments plan to meet local and regional skills needs. However, leaders and governors do not yet have a clear oversight of the college's impact on meeting regional skills gaps. Leaders do not evaluate the proportion of learners who progress into employment related to their courses.

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

Leaders have designed a broad, accessible and inclusive curriculum. The curriculum provides progression pathways from entry level through to employment and higher education. Leaders ensure that learners gain valuable qualifications and develop work-ready skills and behaviours, such as flexibility and adaptability. Leaders work closely and effectively with local authorities and wider regional college networks. They ensure that their inclusive learning offer meets the needs of young people with high needs. The curriculum for adult learners provides the opportunity for adults to

restart their learning. Adult learners improve the knowledge and skills they need in their day-to-day lives, employment and future career goals.

Leaders ensure that learners and apprentices have access to high-quality resources, digital technologies and equipment across curriculum areas. In the level 3 applied general extended diploma in animation, learners use a range of industry-standard software to produce highly complex animations for their final major project. Their technical confidence in the use of this software equips them comprehensively for their next steps. Adult learners who are novices in welding use virtual welding machines first, to develop their skills and confidence. Learners with high needs use specialist equipment and technologies highly effectively. They use the readback function to identify correctly where they used a wrong word and self-correct. This technology enables them to be more independent and less reliant on their support workers. On the games design course, learners use high-specification computers with eye gaze software. The technology enables them to access vocational courses that they would otherwise be unable to study.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They use their experience skilfully to plan interesting lessons. Teaching staff access appropriate professional updating, such as return to industry days. Staff who teach level 3 beauty therapy undertake highly relevant professional training, such as non-surgical aesthetics training. Teachers highly value vocational updating and are better equipped in their job roles.

Leaders ensure that teachers receive the training they need to support their pedagogical development. This includes additional support for those staff who have moved from industry into teaching. Managers provide helpful developmental feedback following lesson visits. Music teachers develop their teaching significantly in areas such as managing cognitive load and behaviour management. Art and design teachers complete training on assessment for learning and questioning techniques. Teachers for inclusive learning participated in a staff development session on Rosenshine's 10 principles of instruction. As a result, teachers adopted a model of 'talk-less teaching', which they have found works more effectively in the classroom. Support workers receive tailored training on learners' individual disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. As a result, teachers can provide better support for learners in their care. Teachers in subcontracted provision benefit from college safeguarding and trauma-informed approaches to teaching. In a few cases, agency staff do not participate in additional training to develop their pedagogical skills.

Teachers plan their lessons carefully to ensure that learning activities are relevant to learners. Teachers build learners' understanding progressively over time. In the most effective lessons, teachers' strategies ensure that learners and apprentices develop a sound understanding of key concepts. Music teachers use coaching very effectively to develop learners' understanding of music performance and production. Learners understand how to clarify and focus their music performance. Beauty teachers use group work to develop learners' understanding of body faradic treatments effectively. Learners become noticeably more confident in discussing how to recommend the treatment to a client. In level 3 health and social care, teachers ensure that learners understand about stages of child development before they plan

and implement activities to support young children in their learning. In site carpentry, learners understand how to mark out materials and hang a door before moving on to the more technical task of making a windowsill, using more complex drawings and power tool skills. As a result, learners are prepared for each stage of their study programme effectively.

Most teachers use a good range of learning checks to ensure that learners and apprentices develop a secure understanding of their subject. Teachers of adult access courses use open and direct questioning and quizzes very effectively. Teachers check learners' understanding and pronunciation of new scientific knowledge and terminology. Teachers in inclusive learning plan frequent recall of topics. As a result, learners process essential knowledge into their long-term memory.

Vocational teachers have a very good understanding of the support needs and challenges of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in their group. Teachers adapt their lesson plans appropriately to meet individual learners' needs. Games design teachers spend individual time with learners whom they know experience heightened anxiety, when introducing new topics. English teachers break down instructions carefully and ensure that notes are made available in advance to help learners and their support workers. Learners with SEND are progressing and achieving in line with, or better than, their peers.

Most teachers give helpful feedback. Learners understand what they do well and what more they need to do to improve their work further. Many learners produce work of a very high standard that shows significant improvement during their course. In the applied general extended diploma in animation, teachers work with learners to critically analyse how working differently on a project could have impacted the product more positively. Learners reflect on their own performance effectively, and most make sustained improvements over time.

A small minority of vocational teachers do not routinely reinforce the importance of accuracy in learners' written work. These few teachers identify the errors that learners make but do not always ensure these are not repeated in future work. As a result, a few learners do not develop the high standards of English skills to support their future progression and careers.

Staff work closely with employers to ensure that they take an active role in the apprentices' journey. Assessors and employers work together effectively to ensure that training is integrated and well coordinated. As a result, apprentices can apply their new learning in the workplace swiftly. Employers appreciate and commend the communications they have with college staff. Employers are confident they can speak to staff and get immediate responses to concerns and queries. As a result, they understand how to support their apprentices effectively to make good progress.

Learners with high needs benefit from well-coordinated packages of therapeutic support, where required. Learners with hearing loss benefit from time with specialist audiologists. Learners who need speech and language therapy receive frequent,

helpful therapeutic interventions. Learners with poor motor control benefit from weekly sessions with an occupational therapist. In addition, learners have exercise regimes provided by their support worker. These exercises enable learners to develop the skills they need to use digital equipment in their learning. As a result, learners gradually increase their confidence and participation in class.

Staff provide appropriate impartial careers advice and guidance. Careers advisers and teachers help learners to know what options are available to them. Learners have access to employer events that support their awareness of the breadth of roles they can progress to. Installation and maintenance electrician apprentices learn helpful business skills that prepare them for self-employment. Early years teachers support apprentices who wish to explore alternative careers as a special educational needs coordinator or in different childcare settings, such as childminding.

Most young learners undertake relevant work experience placements that prepare them effectively for their futures. Apprentices receive effective support from specialist staff when they want to explore careers outside of their employer. As a result, learners and apprentices are well prepared for their next steps.

Learners with high needs receive helpful guidance about their next steps. They can make informed choices about progressing to further training or supported internships. Learners on supported internships undertake work experience that meets their interests and career plans. Learners' work experience settings include leisure centres, primary schools and hospitality settings. Learners are very well prepared to move into employment, which most do successfully.

Leaders and staff promote fundamental British values effectively. Teachers ensure that learners develop a good understanding of how to live and work in modern day Britain, through induction, enrichment lessons and everyday teaching. Level 3 health and social care learners are knowledgeable about the Care Act and equality laws. Learners understand the rights of patients to dignity and non-discriminatory care. ESOL learners are highly respectful of their peers. They are interested in the cultures and life experiences of their peers and listen patiently when learners are taking part in speaking and reading. In most cases, learners have a good understanding and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive and well-resourced personal development curriculum. Learners participate in a curriculum that extends beyond academic, technical and vocational programmes. Learners can study for additional qualifications. Level 3 health and social care learners gain accreditation in paediatric first aid and dementia care. Learners can study The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, British Sign Language, and foreign languages through the Open University. Furthermore, they benefit from extra-curricular activities, such as driving theory and competitions in diversity and recycling.

Learners make good progress from their starting points. Most learners and apprentices stay on their programmes and achieve. Leaders, managers, teachers

and assessors are keenly focused on ensuring that learners and apprentices, including those with SEND, achieve their qualifications.

Leaders deploy thorough processes to assure and improve the quality of teaching. They link quality management activities to staff's development priorities effectively. This has led to an improved and positive attitude to professional development in areas such as construction and music. In addition, these strategies help underperforming staff make necessary improvements. Leaders have taken effective action to improve the few courses where apprentices had low achievement. Leaders take continued action to improve attendance for young learners. Despite these actions, the attendance for young learners is not yet consistently high.

Leaders' oversight of subcontracted provision is thorough. Leaders carry out appropriate due diligence on potential new subcontracting partners. Leaders ensure that subcontracted provision meets the local skills priorities, such as plumbing, gas and welding. Subcontracted provision also complements the full-time college curriculum, such as specialist industry training for learners in sport.

Governors have a good understanding of most of the strengths and areas for improvement at the college. Governors support and challenge leaders effectively to make improvements to the curriculum. Governors participate in curriculum scrutiny activities, such as annual curriculum self-assessments and learning walks. They take an active role in strategic planning for apprenticeships. At board meetings, they discuss key areas of concern. They conduct appropriate analysis of data provided to ensure clear oversight of the curriculum.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- The provider should ensure that young people have high attendance for English and mathematics and in vocational areas where it is currently low.
- The provider should ensure that employers are involved in the co-design and implementation of all curriculum areas across the college.



## Provider details

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<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hrc.ac.uk">www.hrc.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Tony Medhurst
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 to 5 November 2021
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Aspire Sporting Academy Limited BetterWeld Limited CK Assessment & Training LTD Learning & Skills Solutions Limited New Generation and Training Consultancy Limited SPS Training Solutions Limited Tottenham Hotspur Football and Athletic Company Limited

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal curriculum 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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