

# Inspection of North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

Inspection dates: 12 to 15 November 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</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>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College is a large general further education college based on seven campuses across Warwickshire and Leicestershire. The college offers a wide range of professional, technical and vocational courses from entry to degree level to students aged 16 and over, including apprenticeships at levels 2 to 5. The largest subject areas are creative arts, health, retail and hospitality, and engineering. The college offers T levels in a variety of subjects, including health, digital, engineering, education, and childcare. The college has recently enrolled its first cohort of Skills Bootcamp learners.

At the time of inspection, there were 6,244 students and apprentices. Of these, there were 3,162 students studying education programmes for young people, 2,496 adults, 479 apprentices and 107 students with high needs. Just over one-third of all 16 to 18-year-old students study at level 3, a similar proportion study at level 2, and the remainder study at level 1 or below. Adults study courses from entry level to level 5, and the large majority learn either online or through distance learning routes. Apprentices study a variety of apprenticeships from levels 2 to 5, the largest areas being transport operations and engineering. Most students with high needs

study vocational courses, and around one-quarter study courses that are designed specifically for them from entry level to level 2.

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

Students, adult learners and apprentices learn in a supportive and aspirational college environment in which they are motivated to complete their courses and have highly positive attitudes to their learning. Students and apprentices speak highly of their teachers and college leaders and articulate clearly how they feel the college is a safe, welcoming and supportive place to learn. Leaders and teachers set clear and high expectations for behaviour. Students and apprentices demonstrate consistently high levels of respect for their peers and value the chance to learn from each other. They behave well in their classes, at their work placements and around the college.

Students' attendance and punctuality are high across all courses and campuses. Leaders and managers prioritise attendance and punctuality and have devised a whole-college approach to ensure that students are aware of the importance of attendance and its link to their success. Students with high and improving attendance are frequently recognised by leaders and their achievements are celebrated.

Students and apprentices study on campuses that are well-resourced spaces, where leaders have invested significantly in equipment and facilities to help students and apprentices learn. They benefit from dedicated spaces for their vocational specialisms, such as studying construction in a specialist facility at the Harrowbrook campus, engineering at the MIRA Technology Institute campus, and creative arts and media at the Hinkley campus. Students and apprentices, regardless of which campus they study at, benefit from the same support, standards of teaching and cross-college events, such as Remembrance gatherings, promoting the inclusive culture at the college.

Adult learners benefit from well-planned curriculums that provide relevant training and meet regional skills priorities. The courses they study help them to develop the skills they need to secure employment or develop their careers. Adult learners value the flexible teaching available on many courses, which allows them to learn alongside their personal or work commitments.

Apprentices learn skills that enable them to have an immediate impact in the workplace, and to prepare them well for their next steps. Tutors work with apprentices' employers to review apprentices' progress frequently. Apprentices benefit from on- and off-the-job training, which is co-ordinated extremely well. Apprentices learn from experienced teachers who support them to develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. An increasingly high proportion of apprentices achieve their apprenticeships.

Students with high needs have access to a wide range of well-co-ordinated cross-college support to complete their courses and gain independence. In most cases, support managers work closely with teaching staff on vocational courses to ensure that those working with students with high needs are aware of students' individual targets and the strategies that will support them effectively.

Students benefit from a wealth of opportunities to develop their interests. There are many examples, such as opportunities for work experience, hearing from guest speakers, external visits, and internal and external competitions where students broaden their experiences. Some students participate in activities such as esports, book clubs and sports teams.

Students participate in a broad range of social action projects, which develops their understanding of the importance of playing an active role in society. These have recently included supporting a local charity for children with serious illnesses. Students marketed and then sold customised water bottles to students and staff and were able to raise funds for children to see a musical and then meet the cast.

Most students benefit from a tutorial curriculum that contains useful information to support them in their personal lives and future careers. This includes a wealth of topics, including healthy sexual relationships, the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, maintaining mental and physical health, knife crime and awareness of county lines. In a few cases, adults and apprentices cannot recall the detail of some of their learning, particularly about radicalisation and extremism and the risks in their locality.

Students recognise and are rightly proud of the skills and knowledge they develop and how these help them to make progress, giving them the confidence to engage with professionals and peers. Some students become representatives for other students by undertaking the role of course representative or through the student parliament.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and governors have exceptional links with a wide range of strategic groups to understand the skills needs of the local, regional and national economy. This includes the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, local district and county councils, national college groups and local employment taskforces. For example, leaders have worked with local councils to identify the local construction skills needs for forthcoming housing projects.

Leaders use strong links with employers, higher education establishments and industry bodies to support the effective design of the curriculum in all areas. In level 3 motorsport, based on stakeholder feedback, leaders have adjusted the curriculum to ensure that students are taught electrical diagnosis of vehicles as well as working on the core components of vehicles such as chassis and engines. This ensures that students have a broad knowledge and gain substantial benefit from their work placements with these stakeholders early in their programme.

Leaders and governors are extremely aware of the importance of skills development for their students and how they are meeting this need. Leaders identify the need to upskill the workforce both in healthcare and local logistics companies in English,

mathematics and digital skills. They offer functional skills courses to employees and their friends and families. This supports both career progression and development within the community of critical skills in an area where the reading age and mathematics abilities are historically poor.

Staff collaborate extensively with employers and other stakeholders to ensure that they clearly understand the local employment market and the priorities that are specific to their area and demographic. For example, leaders have identified employers' increasing shift towards the electrification of transport fleets, and their use of robotics in warehousing. Leaders work with employers to design bespoke training to enable developments in local industries.

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

Managers and teachers have planned and ordered their curriculums sensibly. As a result, students build on their learning over time, tackling more complex topics and concepts. In GCSE English, teachers have re-ordered the curriculum to provide students with a firm foundation in the understanding of language before approaching more complex reading and writing. For example, students move on from the analysis of language in transactional writing to more complex evaluative writing.

Leaders and managers ensure that teachers are well-qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach. Teachers have sector expertise and are supported by leaders to keep their sector knowledge up to date through industry days provided in the summer. They develop their teaching skills through a cross-campus initiative to share best practices. Where staff are not yet qualified teachers, managers support them to undertake teaching qualifications.

Teachers mostly use effective teaching and questioning strategies so that students and apprentices remember the new knowledge they have learned and can use it in their further studies. In level 3 sport, teachers apply effective questioning techniques using nomination and exemplification. Students' answers, if incorrect, are challenged by both their peers and the teacher. Students then work constructively and collaboratively through subsequent questioning to identify correct answers. However, in a small minority of instances, such as in foundation learning and level 2 health and social care, teachers do not consistently use strategies that are as effective.

Teachers provide well-considered support for students with special educational needs and disabilities which helps them cope well with the demands of their studies. Teachers ensure that students have access to helpful technology, such as laptops, reader pens and speech-to-text software. Students receive extra time to complete their assessments, and tutors provide them with one-to-one support as required. This helps students to make good progress in their learning.

Most teachers use assessment well to check students' and apprentices' understanding and adjust further teaching. Assessment is planned frequently

throughout the year, and teachers use the results of these assessments to plan further learning. This helps to ensure that students and apprentices can apply their learning and achieve their best. Apprentices studying the level 3 lift truck and powered access engineering technician apprenticeship complete assessments throughout their programme that develop in complexity and replicate their end-point assessment. Apprentices complete tests after every learning cycle and undertake practical assessments and professional discussions at milestone points during their apprenticeship. By using this approach, teachers measure effectively apprentices' skills development, while providing them with a clear understanding of the structure and requirements of their final assessments.

Teachers gather information about what students and apprentices already know and can do at the start of their course. However, in too many areas, tutors do not use this information to set targets that are based on students' and apprentices' starting points. In level 2 health and social care, teachers set targets that are too focused on the completion of tasks. They do not focus sufficiently on the vocational knowledge and skills that students need to develop. Consequently, students and apprentices do not fully understand what new knowledge and skills they need or the progress they have made from their individual starting points.

In most instances, teachers provide students and apprentices with helpful feedback that shows them how to improve their work and to understand how they can achieve higher grades. However, in a significant minority of cases, the feedback students and apprentices receive is not precise enough and does not focus sufficiently on what has been done well and what students need to do better.

Most students, adults and apprentices receive useful careers advice and guidance on their potential next steps, which include opportunities to listen to guest speakers from industry, have one-to-one discussions and attend external visits. However, in a small number of cases, adult learners do not know how to access this advice.

Leaders and most managers monitor closely the quality of education students and apprentices receive. They review a range of key performance indicators effectively across each type of provision and receive reports on student feedback and their experiences on their courses. They use this information to determine where improvements are needed and, where necessary, implement actions for improvement. However, leaders and governors do not ensure that they receive sufficient information on the quality of teaching across all of the college. Consequently, they have been unable to intervene quickly in the few of cases where teaching needs to improve, such as in foundation learning and level 2 health and social care.

Leaders and governors have rightly prioritised making the improvements needed in apprenticeships and, following a period of intense focus, an increasing proportion of apprentices now achieve their qualifications. Leaders have improved the support students with special education needs receive, including those with high needs. In a few areas, such as increasing the proportion of young learners who achieve a grade 4 and above in English and mathematics, it has proved more challenging for leaders

to secure the impact needed. Leaders have now changed their approach, and they have implemented actions based on academic research. While improvements have begun to be seen, it is too soon to see the impact.

Leaders are ambitious for students and apprentices. They have embedded competitions throughout the curriculum in which many students participate. Each year, several students and apprentices compete, with success, in a variety of competitions including World Skills.

A high proportion of students and apprentices achieve their qualifications, and most students who study at level 3, including T-levels, achieve merit or distinction grades. Most students, adult learners and apprentices move on to positive destinations on completion of their studies.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Use the starting points of all students and apprentices when planning learning and setting targets to support them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Provide all students and apprentices with feedback that helps them improve their work.
- Monitor the quality of teaching that students, adult learners and apprentices receive across all courses so that leaders can intervene quickly where necessary.
- Increase the proportion of students aged 16 to 19 studying GCSE English and mathematics who achieve grade 4 or higher.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Marion Plant OBE
<b>Provider type</b>	General Further Education College
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 to 27 September 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Senior Vice Principal: Curriculum, Quality & Skills, 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.

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