

Inspection of Hugh Baird College

Inspection dates:

26 to 29 November 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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

Information about this provider

Hugh Baird College is situated in Bootle in the south of the borough of Sefton in Merseyside. The college provides education and training from entry level to level 4 in a wide range of vocational and academic courses. There are just over 2,000 students enrolled on education programmes for young people. This includes large enrolments on building and construction, health and social care, science and A-level courses. The college also offers a range of T levels including digital production, design and development, education and childcare and healthcare science.

There are around 1,100 students on adult courses, with the largest enrolments on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English and mathematics, access to higher education diplomas and courses to support teaching and learning in schools and colleges. The college has just over 500 apprentices. Over half of these are aged 16 to 18. The largest numbers are in carpentry and joinery, healthcare and installation electrician and maintenance electrician. There are currently 99 students who have high needs. Of these, 58 study on specialist courses at Thornton College and the remainder study vocational and A-level courses.

The college operates from five main sites. The Balliol Road Campus provides most vocational courses and apprenticeships. Students also learn and work in commercial

outlets at this campus. These include a restaurant, salon and lifestyle fitness gym. At the Healthcare Campus, students follow health and social care and healthcare science courses. The college offers a diverse range of A-level courses and a few vocational courses at Sefton Sixth Form College. The university centre offers a dedicated place of study for those students on degrees and access to higher education courses. Thornton College is a specialist centre for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Students and apprentices are overwhelmingly positive about the high standard of education, training and support they receive at Hugh Baird College. They appreciate how leaders, managers, teachers and support staff have their best interests at heart, champion their achievements and prepare them for a positive future.

Students and apprentices are taught ambitious curriculums that give them the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in learning and life. They rapidly develop their confidence, resilience and independence because of highly effective teaching, extensive support and participation in life-enhancing experiences. Health and social care students visit Africa to teach in schools. Hospitality students complete a placement in Cyprus to learn about the origin of Cypriot food. Healthcare apprentices learn British Sign Language and gain valuable skills to work in the NHS. ESOL students attend clubs to help combat loneliness and isolation in their local communities. Hairdressing students work with local hostels to provide people who are homeless with an opportunity to get their hair cut or have their nails manicured. Students at the sixth form benefit from extensive enrichment and curriculum enhancement. These experiences provide highly valuable opportunities for students to broaden their horizons and raise their aspirations.

Young students, some with negative experiences of education and many with low prior attainment or attendance, make substantial progress at college. Teachers use their passion for the subject and their extensive vocational expertise to make learning enjoyable and highly relevant to what students want to do next. Employers attend lessons to talk to students about different career options, covering the challenging aspects as well as the more exciting elements. This ensures that students thoroughly understand the sectors they wish to work in.

Adult students follow a range of academic and vocational courses that are closely aligned to their personal and professional aspirations. Leaders respond to the needs of the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers in the local community by providing innovative ESOL provision. Students study a range of vocational pathways such as health, construction or general employability courses, alongside their ESOL course, so they are prepared well for employment. Students on the access to higher education diploma in nursing and midwifery develop an in-depth knowledge of anatomy and physiology as well as academic skills. This means that they are confident to progress to university and employment in hospitals, maternity services and social care.

Apprentices develop the valuable knowledge and skills they need to progress to specialist roles, particularly in areas where there are major skills shortages. Level 3 senior healthcare support worker apprentices learn about mental health and dementia and gain the important skills they need to work in the NHS. Carpentry and joinery apprentices learn to produce simple and dovetail joints swiftly and create scale drawings before they move to technical drawings. This prepares them well for their employment as joiners in the Liverpool City Region, where there are growing skills gaps.

Students with high needs continue to work towards their educational targets while remaining in their communities with their family and friends. Students benefit from purpose-built learning environments, immersive digital rooms, sensory facilities, and adaptive and assistive technologies that promote their independence. Teachers use students' initial education, health and care plan objectives to design challenging curriculums that develop students' independence and communication skills and prepare them effectively for adulthood. Through caring, diligent and exceptional planning, students who face considerable barriers to education thrive and do exceptionally well.

Students and apprentices find the college environment to be welcoming, inclusive and nurturing. They appreciate the 'zero tolerance' approach taken by leaders to any form of bullying, harassment or discrimination. They are confident leaders would act swiftly to deal with any incidents that breached the college's rules and inclusive culture. Students and apprentices appreciate that the college is safe and secure. They know how to report anything that they might be worried about. Young students and those with high needs often describe the college as their second home.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have developed an exceptional network of stakeholders. They work closely with them to fully understand the regional skills landscape. As members of the Liverpool City Region Business and Enterprise Board and the Bootle Partnership Board, leaders ensure that their curriculums are aligned to the areas identified in the Local Skills Improvement Plan. This includes construction, health and early years education. Leaders devise curriculums that are sufficiently agile to equip students and apprentices with the knowledge and skills they need for employment in emerging industries such as low carbon technologies.

Leaders recognise the distinct opportunities available in the Liverpool City Region. This includes the development of logistics, warehousing and manufacturing curriculums in response to the region's freeport freight and logistics facilities, and their partnership work with the Peel Ports Group to develop a specialist apprenticeship. Leaders' extensive network of stakeholders helps them to consistently co-produce and co-deliver curriculums.

As chair of the Association of Liverpool City Regional Colleges, the Principal works collaboratively with other colleges in the region. Leaders are developing technical scholarships with five schools and a local college to support young people to progress into technical education. Leaders work closely with Sefton Council to help meet its education needs. This includes developing a pre-apprenticeship qualification in response to the shortage of teaching assistants in local schools.

Leaders work with the local authority to develop a bespoke curriculum to support young people not in education, employment or training to progress to relevant

courses, apprenticeships or employment. Leaders have worked with the local authority to invest in curriculums to meet the needs of students with high needs and advocate for the development of skills for adult learners.

Leaders systematically review their stakeholder engagement strategy to evaluate how effectively skills needs are being met. Leaders ensure that stakeholders are consistently involved in the planning and teaching of curriculums so that students and apprentices learn the skills they need.

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

Leaders are passionate advocates for their students and apprentices. They understand the power that education and training has to transform lives and reduce social disadvantage. Their ambition to become the best college in the country is founded on the belief that their students and apprentices, staff and local community deserve the best education and training they can provide.

Leaders have made exceptional improvements to the quality of education and training they provide. Students and apprentices benefit from a comprehensive range of academic and technical curriculums that meet their needs and aspirations. Leaders respond very effectively to challenges affecting the specific sectors they work in. For example, they work collaboratively with NHS trusts to provide healthcare apprenticeships. Teachers ensure that the curriculum for students with high needs is comprehensive and enables students to develop the skills they need for adulthood.

Teachers and assessors sequence curriculums very skilfully. Students and apprentices systematically build on their prior learning and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful. Students on the T Level in early years and education begin their placement at the start of their course so that they can develop their practical skills alongside learning about child development theory. On level 2 electrical installation, teachers work closely with employers and use information on regional skills gaps to plan the curriculum. They develop students' understanding of core concepts so students can confidently apply principles such as Ohm's Law in practical situations.

Teachers and assessors have extensive specialist knowledge. They use this effectively to plan and teach highly informative lessons. Teachers and assessors present information clearly and use a range of techniques to clearly explain new ideas. They provide meaningful recaps on prior learning, including using quizzes to check what students and apprentices know and can do. Most teachers thoroughly check students' learning and understanding. In A-level business, teachers look closely at the work students are completing and ask them to talk through their thinking. They then adapt their questions accordingly and correct any misconceptions.

Most teachers and assessors provide high-quality developmental feedback that identifies what students and apprentices need to do to improve their work. Students and apprentices respond positively to this feedback. ESOL teachers help students to develop their confidence to correct themselves when they make mistakes. Most apprentices are well prepared for their final assessment and know what grades they are aiming to achieve. However, a few carpentry and joinery apprentices are not aware of what their final assessment consists of or the standard of their current work.

Students and apprentices are very well prepared for what they want to do next. The vast majority achieve their qualifications and an increasing number achieve high grades. A-level students make good progress from their starting points and over two-thirds achieve A* to C grades. On vocational courses, just over a third of students achieve distinction grades. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship is high and over half achieve merits and distinctions. Students with high needs and those who are care-experienced achieve exceptionally well. Adult students make substantial progress. They develop the resilience needed to overcome barriers such as balancing education with the demands of their personal lives and work.

Most students and apprentices progress to positive destinations. Almost all A-level students gain places at their university of choice and two-thirds of apprentices progress to a new work role. Almost all students with high needs move to their intended destination, continue their education or move to adult social care.

Leaders, teachers and assessors create calm, purposeful learning environments. They reinforce the high standards of behaviour they expect from students and apprentices using an ABC behavioural model (attend, behave and commit). At Thornton College, staff members skilfully redirect negative behaviours and encourage students to develop self-regulation techniques. Students are provided with a range of strategies they may need to de-escalate their behaviours using sensory equipment such as stress balls or mindfulness techniques.

Leaders promote a culture where students and apprentices are championed to achieve their potential. They provide students and apprentices with a clear line of sight to their next steps and career goals. Tutors provide highly effective impartial careers advice. They support students and apprentices to develop their interests and consider the breadth of roles available in the sectors they wish to work in.

Leaders use impactful quality assurance processes including the observations of lessons, reviewing students' and apprentices' work and conducting surveys. Leaders have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve. Leaders provide targeted support to bring about sustained improvement.

Teachers are dual professionals and experts in the subject they teach. Leaders support staff to maintain their industry expertise. For example, plumbing teachers visited a hydrogen village to develop their knowledge of hydrogen and biomass fuels. They use this new knowledge to teach students about the effectiveness of

hydrogen as an alternative fuel. Teachers entering the profession straight from industry are enrolled on an 'Off the Tools' programme to help them swiftly develop their teaching skills.

Governance is highly effective. Governors have extensive experience and expertise in industry, compulsory education, and further and higher education. They use their expertise to scrutinise, challenge and support leaders to continue to bring about improvements. Governors know the college's strategic priorities and support leaders to provide the best education and training they can for their students and apprentices.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130490
Address	Balliol Road Bootle Merseyside L20 7EW
Contact number	01513534400
Website	www.hughbaird.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Rachael Hennigan
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	26 February to 1 March 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, 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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