

Inspection of Winstanley College

Inspection dates: 28 to 31 January 2025

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
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Winstanley College is a sixth-form college in the metropolitan borough of Wigan. Students come to the college from a wide geographical area, particularly from schools across Wigan and other parts of Greater Manchester. All students are aged between 16 and 18 years and study full-time education programmes for young people.

At the time of the inspection, there were around 2,200 students at the college. Seven students were in receipt of high-needs funding. Most students follow A-level programmes. There are 34 A-level subjects taught at the college and a further 11 level 3 applied general courses in business, criminology, engineering, health and care, information technology, music performance, music technology and science. A minority of students study a mixed programme that combines up to two A levels with a level 3 vocational course. The largest subject areas are science and mathematics, social sciences, art and design, and business and law. Leaders have very recently introduced a T level in media, broadcast and production.

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

Students describe the college as one big community, which they are immensely proud to belong to. They enjoy attending college and find the environment welcoming, inclusive, caring and friendly. Students are highly motivated to learn and are very diligent because they want to excel in their studies.

Students feel understood, respected and cared for. They say that everyone embraces and celebrates difference and that they can be who they want to be. Students benefit from highly effective support systems that keep them safe. They are comfortable talking to members of staff and to seek support when they need it. Staff deal with concerns swiftly and very effectively.

Students participate frequently in an extensive range of high-quality additional activities. These include clubs and societies, such as the anime and manga club, as well as subject-related activities that extend their learning. In English, students attend creative writing and gothic fiction workshops and contribute articles to the long-standing 'Winstanley Waffle' weekly magazine. Through these activities, and their contribution to college life generally, students broaden their knowledge of the wider world and develop as responsible and resilient citizens. They leave college as mature and independent young people who move on to higher education or to employment with great confidence.

Staff support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with high needs, very effectively. They gain a wealth of information about students' needs and aspirations prior to enrolment. Teachers use this detailed information to plan individualised learning that helps these students to achieve at least as well as, and often better than, their peers. Leaders make good use of high-needs funding to ensure that college buildings and resources are accessible to all students.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work with a wide range of employers and other stakeholders, including the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, to identify and meet local, regional and national skills needs. Where stakeholders identify skills shortages, leaders work effectively with leaders of the other local colleges to plan and coordinate new courses to fill the knowledge and skills gaps in the region. For example, Winstanley College leaders acted quickly by introducing the T level in media, broadcast and production to meet local skills shortages in this sector. Leaders have invested significantly in relevant industry-standard equipment to ensure that they teach students the skills that they need for local employment.

Leaders have developed effective relationships with a range of partners to ensure that their curriculums align to local, regional and often national needs. Partners provide curriculum content advice, workshops, visits, live projects and professional

development opportunities for staff. These ensure that staff and students learn current academic and industry knowledge and practices. Managers for the level 3 extended certificate in engineering work with employers to design and teach the curriculum. They have collaboratively designed a short course on the use of spreadsheets and the production of digital graphs to respond to employers' concerns around a deficit in these skills. In A-level business, teachers work with universities and employers to focus the curriculum on the skills needed regionally in digital, creative and business management. These curriculums are aligned closely to the local skills improvement plan objectives. However, leaders do not yet involve stakeholders sufficiently in the design and teaching of all their courses.

Students develop additional skills through working on community projects. For example, they have presented their initial ideas on how they can support the regeneration of the local railway station. This has helped them to develop relevant skills, such as creative thinking, problem-solving, and budgeting.

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

Leaders and teachers are aspirational for what their students can achieve. They have designed highly ambitious curriculums that prepare students very effectively for their next steps in education or employment. Leaders inspire students to fulfil their potential by engendering a steadfast commitment and passion for their studies.

Teachers plan and sequence their curriculums very carefully. Students develop new knowledge and skills swiftly and the work that they complete becomes increasingly demanding. In A-level English language and literature, teachers start with a straightforward text to support students to develop further their skills acquired from studying the subject at GCSE level. Students are soon able to apply their new knowledge and skills to analyse and interpret the literary and linguistic features of more complex texts.

Teachers are very well-qualified, experienced and enthusiastic practitioners who motivate students to give their best. Teachers who work as examiners frequently share their knowledge with their teams, so that they can help students to prepare for success in their examinations.

In lessons, teachers present information skilfully. They use well-devised resources to explain concepts. In mathematics, teachers use student-friendly examples when teaching standard deviation. For example, they use data about the money that students spend in the canteen to identify variables. Teachers use questioning effectively to help students to recall information from previous learning. They make excellent use of mini whiteboards to check students' answers swiftly and to intervene when they identify errors or misconceptions.

Teachers take a highly organised approach to how they assess students' work and give feedback. They are experts in adapting their teaching based on students' assessment results. Teachers frequently check for any knowledge or skills gaps and

refer students to additional weekly support lessons, where needed. They set substantial half-termly formal assessments and frequent tests and quizzes to help to consolidate students' learning over time. In upper-sixth mathematics lessons, teachers refer back to lower-sixth work on statistics and mechanics so that students do not forget it.

Students receive very helpful internal and independent careers advice and guidance. Students with high needs receive high-quality careers advice that is individualised to their needs. Staff prepare all students very well for applications to highly selective universities. They provide clear guidance for those who would rather pursue a degree apprenticeship or an employment route. Students say that the information that they receive helps them to aspire to achieve the best possible destination.

Teachers place a strong focus on developing students' study skills, including problem-solving, inference and organisation. This helps students to achieve highly on their A-level and vocational courses. Around two thirds achieve the highest grades. The few students who need to re-sit GCSEs in English and mathematics all achieve a grade 4 or above. Students with high needs and SEND make particularly strong progress from their starting points. Teachers and personal tutors support care-experienced students extremely well. They understand their challenges and help them to succeed at least as well as their peers.

Leaders and managers have established a highly effective quality assurance and improvement process. The quality improvement activities that they carry out identify swiftly any weaknesses that impact on students' progress. They have led to improved outcomes in under-performing subjects, such as geography.

Staff value the many and varied training and development opportunities that leaders provide. Teachers report that activities are positive and help them to reflect on and improve their teaching practices. Leaders ensure that all staff working with students with high needs have specialist training in areas such as neurodiversity, autism awareness and manual handling.

Governors have the necessary skills and experience to carry out their roles effectively. They use their expertise to provide effective support to leaders and to challenge them if they have any concerns. Governors have a very detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of education. They strive for continuous improvement, putting the students at the heart of all that they do. Governors are frequent visitors to the college. They attend a variety of student events such as concerts, a 'culture day' and open evenings. They use these activities to help them to validate what leaders tell them about the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130522
Address	Winstanley Road Billinge Wigan Lancashire WN5 7XF
Contact number	01695 633244
Website	www.winstanley.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Simon Lett
Provider type	Sixth-form college
Date of previous inspection	3 to 6 February 2020
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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Jane Young	Ofsted Inspector
Maura Cummins	Ofsted Inspector

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