

Inspection of Blackpool and The Fylde College

Inspection dates: 11 to 14 February 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Blackpool and the Fylde College is a large general further education college in Lancashire. The college offers courses from entry level through to higher education, and apprenticeships from levels 2 to 6. Their specialisms include advanced manufacturing, construction, digital, energy, engineering, health and social care, maritime and project management.

Blackpool is an area of high economic and social disadvantage with some of the most deprived wards in England. Compared to the national rate, the town has a very high proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the highest rate of care-experienced children in England.

The college operates from nine main campuses. The Bispham Campus and the Gateway Campus are the main campuses for 16-18-year-old students. The University Centre is the main location for higher education and the Blackpool School of Arts, which provides courses in fashion, graphics, performing arts, music, photography and media. Specialist apprenticeships are offered at Lancashire Energy HQ, the college's energy and engineering training centre. At the Nautical Campus in

Fleetwood, students and apprentices study maritime and offshore survival courses. Provision for adult students is available at a health and social care career academy in Bickerstaffe House. Seasiders provides a dedicated adult learning centre, with basic skills courses for both English speaking and non-English speaking students. Fleetwood Learning Centre is a facility dedicated to adult education designed to help students improve their skills in English, mathematics and computing. At the Build Up Centre, leaders work with Jobcentre Plus, Blackpool Council and local construction firms to help adults gain employment in the construction industry.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 2,800 students on education programmes for young people. Just under half studied at level 3, including 500 T-level students. There were just over 2,370 adult students. Around a third studied at entry and level 1, two-thirds at levels 2 and 3 and a small number at level 4. The college offers a Skills Bootcamp in cultural leadership, though this was not running at the time of the inspection. There were approximately 1,900 apprentices in learning. Most apprentices studied at levels 3 to 6, with smaller numbers at level 2. The college received high needs funding for 226 students, who study across a range of courses from entry to level 3.

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

Students and apprentices thoroughly enjoy their education and training. They are highly motivated and ambitious to achieve their qualifications, so that they can move closer to achieving their career ambitions and personal goals. Tutors, progress coaches and mentors provide exceptional support to young students who have a history of very low school attendance and are at risk of becoming NEET. Students substantially improve their attendance to college due to the support they receive.

Students and apprentices appreciate that their tutors are subject specialists, who explain topics clearly and help them to deepen their knowledge, learn new practical skills and develop their professional behaviours. Students on the level 3 extended diploma in aeronautical engineering learn to complete practical repairs with accuracy and precision. Access to higher education (access) students become highly competent in using a range of research techniques and strategies. Students on preparation for work courses develop a range of skills they need to secure their independence, such as learning how to cook nutritious cost-effective meals. Apprentices contribute positively to their workplaces. Chartered manager degree apprentices gain a good understanding of how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used in recruitment. They then evaluate the risks, benefits and rewards for their own organisations and use AI to support applicants who need reasonable adjustments.

Students with high needs receive effective individualised support from a well-coordinated team of learning support assistants. They benefit from using assistive technologies, such as reader pens, speech to text software and specialist therapies such as speech and language therapy and physiotherapy. Students participate in lessons confidently and gain greater independence.

Most students benefit from meaningful encounters with the world of work. Employers conduct interviews and host orientation days to support T-level education and childcare students to thoroughly prepare for their extended work placements. Performing arts students work with the NHS on projects to raise awareness of organ donation.

Students and apprentices participate in various community events and raise money for local charities. Uniformed public services students provide food parcels for local veterans at Christmas and carry out civic duties in the local Remembrance Day parade. Tutors who teach English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) help adult students find out more about their communities. Students work collaboratively to design information sheets on how to contribute to the community, environmental responsibility, jury service and voting in the UK. Students understand how they can actively participate in public life.

Leaders, managers, tutors and support staff know and care about their students and apprentices and want the best for them. They take great pride in their achievements and their developing confidence, self-esteem and resilience. Where young students felt shy and awkward to speak to others and give presentations in class, they now do this confidently and articulately. Students with high needs on preparation for

employment courses gain significantly in confidence and learn to overcome their anxieties. They learn to socialise with their peers and make new friends. In motor vehicle, adult students persevere with practical activities until they find a solution.

Students' and apprentices' behaviour is exemplary. Tutors encourage them to emulate high, professional standards. Students in hospitality, uniformed public services and maritime wear their uniforms with dignity and pride. Students and apprentices who work in safety critical industries, pay careful attention to health and safety to meet high industry standards, for instance, in aeronautical and construction.

Students and apprentices feel safe in college. They are confident that if they reported any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, staff would take them seriously and act quickly to resolve the situation.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have established highly effective links with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, such as NHS health trusts, BAE Systems and local authorities. They understand local, regional and national skills needs very well and use this information to strategically plan their curriculum offer. Leaders respond adeptly to skills shortages and the borough's recruitment and regeneration needs. Leaders are developing the 'Multiversity' in the town centre to provide the local community with flexible routes to higher education and employment.

Leaders collaborate exceptionally well with a wide range of stakeholders, including The Lancashire Colleges Group. They ensure that collectively they are well placed to meet the future needs of key industries, such as health and social care, engineering and hospitality sectors. Leaders work collaboratively as a lead partner with higher education institutions to further develop higher level digital skills. Leaders have invested substantially in resources, such as robotics, immersive learning and a virtual dissection and visualisation table to ensure that students, apprentices and employers can learn up-to-date skills. Leaders use employers' expertise to inform their curriculums. For example, they collaborated with employers to co-design the officer of the watch and small vessel chief engineer apprenticeship to meet the demands of the maritime sector.

Leaders worked in partnership with the Fylde Coast Academy Trust and Myerscough College to create the 'Compass' curriculum. This provides year 10 pupils with vocational training in areas, such as construction, hair and beauty and esports. This helps pupils and their teachers to learn about the diverse range of rewarding career paths they can aspire to.

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

Leaders have made rapid progress from the previous inspection and have dealt with almost all the areas for improvement identified. They have substantially improved the quality of training that apprentices receive and the proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship. Leaders are relentless in monitoring students' attendance and intervene quickly to help students to attend their lessons. Students' attendance is high. Leaders have designed a highly relevant personal and professional development curriculum that is informed by educational research and a deep understanding of the local and regional context. Students and apprentices know about the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and know where to seek help.

Tutors ensure that curriculums are ambitious. They teach their subjects in a coherent order that helps students and apprentices to learn new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Level 2 uniformed public services students firstly build discipline and camaraderie with fitness and drill exercises. They learn to accurately assess their fitness levels and track their progress. They develop important practical skills, such as map reading. Near the end of the course, students organise a charity event and an expedition. On adult ESOL courses, tutors start by focusing on students' personal development and then move to consider their professional development, so students are prepared effectively for further study or employment. In addition to their ESOL qualifications, students also complete additional qualifications in mathematics and citizenship. On the level 6 chartered manager degree apprenticeship, apprentices first learn about people management. They then apply their learning in their workplace through developing valuable improvement projects, such as the effectiveness of in-house training or the experiences of patients in the NHS. These projects have a positive impact on apprentices' workplaces.

Tutors are subject specialists with highly relevant industry experience. Most use teaching strategies skilfully to ensure that students and apprentices understand and retain information. On level 2 uniformed services, tutors break information down very carefully, use well-designed practical activities and discussion to consolidate learning. On the level 1 introduction to culinary skills, tutors use effective quizzes to help adult students develop a secure knowledge of complex culinary terms and food hygiene legislation. However, on a few courses, tutors do not plan activities for young people effectively enough. A few students complete activities quicker than others and have to wait for the next task. Occasionally, tutors do not break students' education, health and care plan outcomes down into small enough steps so that students with high needs know precisely what they need to do to improve.

Tutors mostly use a range of effective strategies to check and consolidate learning. They ask probing questions to ascertain the depth of students' and apprentices' knowledge and to identify gaps in learning. Students and apprentices readily recall prior learning. Tutors who teach GCSE mathematics check learning systematically and use the results of assessments in lessons to adapt their future teaching. Access tutors skilfully use a range of strategies, such as group work, quizzes and

demonstrations. They use positive reinforcement effectively to build students' confidence and resilience.

Tutors mostly provide students and apprentices with effective feedback that tells them what they have done well and what they specifically need to do to improve. Students and apprentices act on this and resubmit improved work that often achieves a higher grade. However, in a few instances, tutors provide cursory feedback, which does not provide students or apprentices with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Most students and apprentices develop the English and mathematical skills they need for their further training or intended employment. Level 2 health and social care students confidently use peak flow meters to measure lung capacity. They then accurately calculate the mathematical average using the mean calculation. They use technical terminology and define complex terms with precision. Level 3 diploma in maritime studies cadets swiftly develop their oral presentation and report writing skills. However, on a few courses, students are not taught how to reference sources to prepare for higher-level study.

Most young students achieve their qualifications and move on to further learning or employment. Leaders recognise that students' achievement on a few level 1 and level 2 courses is too low. Adult students achieve very well and make sustained progress from their starting points. Most apprentices achieve their apprenticeship and almost half achieve merit or distinction grades.

Leaders provide students and apprentices with access to a wide range of enrichment activities related to the theme of 'bodies, hearts and minds'. This includes competitive sports, arts and crafts, mindfulness and well-being sessions. Students appreciate how these activities help them to fit into college life, make friends and work as part of a team. Students with high needs participate in residential trips, where they participate in activities such as zip wiring, climbing and team building. Students gain confidence and learn to overcome their anxieties.

Leaders prepare students and apprentices for future success in employment or training by providing high-quality, unbiased careers education, information, advice and guidance. Students and apprentices receive effective support to develop their CVs, prepare for interviews and explore the roles available in their chosen field. University staff talk to students about how to construct a personal statement. Staff provide students with high needs specialist careers advice to help them to understand their choices.

Leaders work proactively with schools, local authorities and support agencies to meet the needs of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET. Leaders have developed an effective programme to re-engage young people in education or employment.

Leaders have developed a highly inclusive community across the college in which staff feel valued. Staff flourish in the open, trusting culture of self-improvement.

Leaders have significantly strengthened the training that staff receive to improve their teaching. Tutors attend pedagogical workshops on retrieval practice, quizzing and questioning techniques and how to manage disruption in lessons. Tutors collaborate confidently with their peers and make rapid improvements in their teaching.

Governors bring a wealth of expertise to their roles. They receive comprehensive reports from leaders about the quality of education and training and provide rigorous scrutiny and challenge. Governors are passionate about the college and how it meets the needs of a diverse range of students and apprentices.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Provide consistently high standards of feedback to young students and apprentices so they know precisely what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase the proportion of students on education programmes for young people who achieve their level 1 and level 2 qualifications.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130739
Address	Ashfield Road Bispham Blackpool Lancashire FY2 0HB
Contact number	01253352352
Website	www.blackpool.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Alun Francis, CEO
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	9 to 12 November 2021
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the 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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