

# Inspection of The City of Liverpool College

Inspection dates: 30 January to 2 February 2024

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

## Information about this provider

The City of Liverpool College is a very large general further education college. There are five main sites. At the Arts Centre, leaders offer creative and digital courses taught in art workshops, recording studios, dance and drama facilities and multimedia studios. At the Learning Exchange, they provide a variety of sports and leisure courses as well as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). At the Clarence Street campus, students aged 16 to 18 study from a choice of 16 A levels and adults follow access to higher education (access) courses. At the Duke Street campus, leaders offer catering, hospitality, travel, hair, beauty and holistic therapies. Technical and enterprise courses are based at the Vauxhall Road campus. These include trades such as bricklaying, painting and decorating, joinery, plumbing, and electrical and gas installation. The Vauxhall Road campus also houses most of the apprenticeship provision.

At the time of the inspection, there were 7,644 students and apprentices studying at the college. There were 3,551 students aged 16 to 18 years on education programmes for young people. Students were enrolled on a range of academic and vocational courses, in most subject areas, from entry level to level 3. Just over half studied level 3 courses. These included T levels in management and administration,

education and early years, engineering and manufacturing, construction, digital production, design and development, health and science. Just under half of students studied at level 2, with a small number of students on courses at level 1 or below.

There were 3,382 adults in learning. Just over a third were on entry or level 1 courses, primarily ESOL. A further third of students studied at level 2 and just over 800 were on level 3. This included eight different access pathways and a range of extended diplomas including performing arts, creative media and health and social care. There were 559 apprentices. Just over two thirds of these were on level 3 apprenticeships mostly in construction and engineering. The college received high-needs funding for 71 students. Almost all students were on academic and vocational courses; seven followed a specialised 'Pathways' course.

There were 81 learners aged 14 to 16 who studied at the college for one day per week on a school-release programme. They undertook courses in construction, motor vehicle and hair and beauty.

Leaders subcontract specialised education and training for young people and adults to six other providers. This includes Skills Bootcamps in heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driving.

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

Students and apprentices have a very positive attitude towards the college and their learning. They are respectful of their peers and teachers, actively listen and focus on their learning. They are motivated and enjoy coming to college. They talk positively about how teachers support them and motivate them to achieve.

Students and apprentices benefit from a highly effective personal development programme. This focuses on students' and apprentices' smooth transition into college. They consider how to learn and succeed on their course, and then prepare for progression. Progress leaders (PLs) are pivotal in bringing all college services and external partners together to provide students with the support that they need to learn, achieve and progress.

On education programmes for young people, teachers use recap activities and discussions that students enjoy. These help students to develop fluency and remember key concepts with increasing accuracy. Leaders and teachers create diverse opportunities to expose students to disciplines beyond the curriculum. Students on level 1 art and design visit galleries in the city, attend guest speaker sessions and exhibit their own work in a local gallery. Students are inspired to pursue their studies further. Leaders work with external organisations to provide public speaking, confidence and resilience workshops, and wider opportunities for students. Workshops have recently focused on how students can use storytelling to build personal resilience and help their own stories to end in success.

Adult learners enjoy their experiences at college and progress exceptionally well in their studies. ESOL students explain how their improved English skills enable them to be more independent at work and in the community. They can now make medical appointments, go shopping and communicate clearly with work colleagues. Students enjoy vocational tasters to areas such as construction, engineering, barbering and hairdressing. They are aware of career opportunities available to them. Leaders create diverse opportunities to develop adults' personal and employability skills. In carpentry and joinery, female students take part in a women in construction mentoring programme. They benefit from a range of activities including mock interviews and 'a day in the life' experience that builds their confidence when on site. A national joinery firm offers masterclasses in accounts, budgeting and improving profit margins. Leaders provide all students with Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards after the first term as a reward for their efforts.

Teachers are quick to recognise the barriers to learning some students face and put appropriate support measures in place. On HGV Skills Bootcamps, teachers deliver extra workshops to help students develop the study skills they need to complete the course. Students who have had a long break from education remain on their course and achieve. They produce written work to a high standard and make rapid progress in their driving competencies.

Apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need.

Leaders provide additional qualifications to enhance apprentices' learning and to make them as employable as possible. For example, level 3 refrigeration air conditioning and heat pump engineering technicians complete additional learning on mobile refrigeration. Teachers deliver interesting and engaging training sessions. They use remote learning well to develop apprentices' confidence and prepare them effectively for their final assessments.

Leaders create an environment where students with high needs are welcomed and provided with the support to meet their needs. Staff work with students, parents, social workers, and other professionals before they start at college to ensure they can provide the best possible care and support. Learning support practitioners work effectively with students to ensure they can appropriately participate in lessons. Students talk positively about how teachers support them and help them to remember new concepts. For example, they recall a song in mathematics which helps them to remember mode, median and mean. They are proud of the work they produce and the friendships they have made.

Students feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Many students have experienced traumatic events in their lives, and they are acutely aware of local risks and the dangers involved in social media. Students appreciate the haven the college provides and they value being part of its positive community.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have developed an exceptional network of stakeholders across their civic, community, education and employer communities. Their engagement spans across all levels of college activity from strategic partnerships to curriculum areas and individual students. The impact of these relationships is highly recognised locally, regionally, nationally and, in a few instances, internationally.

Industry boards provide sector-specific intelligence, so that leaders understand the skills particular sectors need. Leaders ensure that curriculums are up to date and meet industry standards. They have secured significant funding to invest in new equipment and technologies to develop students' technical skills and to meet employers' current and future needs.

Teachers are extremely passionate about supporting students to work in the industries that they love. They utilise their contacts very effectively to provide opportunities for students to work on live briefs, attend stakeholder-delivered master classes and to apply their skills in realistic, practical work environments. They weave work-related opportunities seamlessly into their curriculums.

Students develop highly relevant experience through their engagement with wider community projects, such as Eurovision and work with local schools. They develop additional work-related skills such as teamworking, communication and confidence.

Several student projects have won or been nominated for prestigious, national awards.

Stakeholders contribute very effectively to students' careers education, information, advice, and guidance. They motivate students by providing their own career progression stories, often from low starting points, through to senior leadership positions in highly successful organisations.

Governors have a clear, detailed understanding of how effectively the college meets local and regional skills needs. They are immersed in the culture of ensuring that students receive a broad curriculum that develops them as a whole person, and does not just develop their technical skills.

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

Leaders are ambitious for what students and apprentices can achieve, regardless of their personal or educational starting points or the challenges they face. They are passionately committed to turning disadvantage into advantage through the education, training and support that they provide.

Leaders ensure curriculums help students and apprentices prepare for their next steps and progress to aspirational careers. Students and apprentices benefit from an extensive range of social and cultural activities that enhance their wider learning and personal development. These include clubs, societies, cultural events, sport and student union activities. Students and apprentices develop their interests, expand their horizons and raise their awareness of both the wider world and their local communities.

Teachers plan and structure curriculums effectively and provide students and apprentices with rich learning experiences. Students on level 1 performance and production perform a series of mini gigs before the course culminates in a full live performance. On level 2 hairdressing, adult students begin their work placement when they have developed their knowledge and skills sufficiently so that the experience is more valuable. Apprentices on level 3 refrigeration air conditioning and heat pump engineering technician first learn about safe working practices and the core knowledge of refrigeration systems. They then recall and apply this knowledge to more complex tasks, such as safely locking out electrical systems prior to carrying out electrical work.

Teachers are suitably qualified and knowledgeable in their subjects. Most are dual professionals and maintain their vocational and technical currency. Teachers on the T level in digital production design and development have worked in the industry and have expertise in legislation, cyber security and programming. Leaders provide teachers with effective continuing professional development. This includes 'The Liverpool Way', an evidence-based approach to teaching that encourages teachers to chunk lessons, scaffold learning and provide students and apprentices with live feedback.

Teachers use their specialist knowledge and teaching skills effectively, so that students and apprentices readily grasp key concepts. They use a range of in-class assessment strategies, such as quizzes, group discussions and questioning, to check students' and apprentices' understanding thoroughly before they move on to the next stage of learning. Teachers ask questions of apprentices that stretch their knowledge beyond the practical task they are completing. Teachers encourage students and apprentices to collaborate well and share their thoughts and ideas. Access students work in small groups to evaluate several key psychological studies on conformity. They challenge each other's thinking and assumptions and develop their understanding.

Teachers foster a culture of high expectations for students with high needs. They use information gathered from students' education, health and care plans, parents, and students themselves, to set meaningful targets. They monitor students' progress carefully. Teachers, in consultation with the additional learning support team, reduce support over time when students have developed their confidence.

Teachers do not consistently provide students and apprentices with precise, developmental feedback they can use to improve their work. Teachers' feedback to apprentices is often overly descriptive and not personalised. On a few courses, teachers include mostly generic feedback such as asking students to include more depth rather than identifying the specific things they need to do better. Students on the level 1 introductory certificate in vocational studies and some GCSE courses are not always able to recall what they need to do to improve their work.

Students, including those with high needs and on subcontracted provision, achieve good results. The vast majority of access students progress into higher education and are well prepared. They learn how to find reliable academic sources and take effective notes. Students with high needs achieve results that are at least in line with those of their peers. However, students' achievement on AS courses is far too low and too many students leave their course before they move to a full A-level programme. Although apprentices achieve well, too many leave their programme before they complete it.

Students and apprentices are ready for their next steps. They successfully progress to a range of destinations including further and higher education, training and employment. The majority find their college experience to be transformative and life-enhancing.

Leaders set clear expectations for behaviour and attitudes. They adopt a trauma-informed approach to developing the positive behaviours they expect from students. They accept that students are not the work-ready, finished article when they arrive. If students fail to meet their expectations, staff use a positive behaviour framework to educate and develop rather than penalise and punish.

Although most apprentices and students with high needs attend well, attendance rates are not consistently high for young students or adults. Leaders set realistic individual targets to improve attendance that take account of students' prior

experiences and barriers to learning in the context of very high persistent and severe absence rates across schools in the city. Specialist PLs know students very well and coordinate multi-agency interventions to help students attend more regularly.

Students benefit from thorough careers education, information, advice and guidance to ensure they are on the right programme and are aware of their options at the end of their course. PLs focus on 'careers not courses' to develop students' work-readiness. They run employer, apprenticeship and curriculum events to provide students with greater insight into their potential career pathways.

Leaders have effective quality assurance processes in place, including for their subcontracted provision. They undertake visits to lessons, analyse data and gather feedback from students and apprentices. They have implemented progress boards, self-assessment moderation meetings and impact review meetings that accurately measure students' and apprentices' progress through the curriculum. Teachers are supported effectively with coaching and mentoring by advanced practitioners and external organisations to improve their teaching skills.

Governors receive detailed, high-quality reports that give them a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. They use this information effectively to provide scrutiny and challenge to leaders and ensure they continue to offer high-quality education and training.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Ensure teachers provide students and apprentices with precise, developmental feedback that they fully understand and use to improve their work.
- Improve the outcomes for students on AS/A-level courses and ensure that more apprentices are retained on their programmes.

## Provider details

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>      | 130487  |
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| <b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b> | Elaine Bowker   |
| <b>Provider type</b>                | General further education college   |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>  | 2 to 5 October 2017   |
| <b>Main subcontractors</b>          | Liverpool Media Academy Limited<br>Sysco Business Skills Academy Limited<br>FTW Training Ltd<br>Orangebox Training<br>Northwest Education and Training Limited<br>Back 2 Work Complete Training Limited |



## 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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| Suzanne Horner               | His Majesty’s Inspector |
| Scott Cubitt                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Hayley Lomas                 | His Majesty’s Inspector |
| Nikki Taylor                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Peter Wood                   | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Ruth Szolkowska              | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Nicola Welland               | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Fionnuala Swann              | Ofsted Inspector        |
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