

Inspection of Hopwood Hall College

Inspection dates: 25 to 28 April 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Hopwood Hall College (Hopwood) is a large general further education college in Greater Manchester. It is situated across two campuses, one in Rochdale town centre and one in a 70-acre woodland site in Middleton. Hopwood provides education and training in a wide range of curriculum areas, including construction, engineering, automotive, health and social care, animal management, creative and digital media, business and accounting, education and childcare, digital, information technology and computing, and hospitality and catering.

At the time of the inspection, there were 3,331 learners enrolled at the college aged 16 to 18 years, studying across a range of level 1 to 3 vocational programmes. There were 133 learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding. Thirty high-needs learners studied a foundation learning programme, and the remainder studied programmes in all vocational areas. There were 621 apprentices enrolled on apprenticeship standards at levels 2, 3 and 4, mainly in construction, engineering, business, and hospitality. There were 4,020 adult learners enrolled on a variety of short courses, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and longer programmes, such as access to higher education. The college subcontracts to five other providers, all for adult learning programmes.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy attending Hopwood. This is because leaders and staff promote a highly inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the college. Learners and apprentices come from a wide range of different backgrounds and cultures. Hopwood is a place where difference is respected and celebrated. Learners with high needs are encouraged to overcome their barriers to learning. They told inspectors that learning at Hopwood made them feel that learners with high needs could achieve their goals, whereas before, they did not.

Learners and apprentices increase their confidence and self-esteem during their time at college. Most learners are confident to collaborate with their peers, ask and answer questions and seek help when they need further explanation of a topic. Most learners persevere and remain resilient when faced with adversity. Most learners and apprentices make good progress on their courses.

Most learners and apprentices receive a high standard of training at Hopwood. Senior leaders and managers ensure that their curriculums are ambitious and that they align with local and regional needs. They carefully consider the courses that they provide for learners and apprentices, including learners with high needs. Most learners progress to further learning, apprenticeships or employment after successfully completing their courses.

Many learners attending the college have experienced trauma, are the furthest from engaging with education or are new to the country. Leaders have trained staff on how to support learners who need extra help to integrate into college life or who present with challenging behaviour. This includes promoting positivity, altering tone of voice, and showing empathy as part of their trauma-informed approach. This has widened participation in education in the borough and has engaged learners who would otherwise not be in employment, education or training.

Learners feel safe from bullying and harassment. Staff listen when learners tell them about their concerns. In the few instances where behaviour falls short of leaders' high expectations, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Most learners and apprentices are polite and respectful towards staff and each other. Most learners attend college regularly and on time. However, leaders acknowledge that attendance in a few areas is too low, particularly in English and mathematics.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a comprehensive and well-informed understanding of local and regional skills needs. They align the curriculum extremely well to the key priorities of a wide variety of stakeholders in the locality and in the region. This ensures that learners and apprentices develop specific skills to move into employment where

there are skills shortages. For example, they work with science and engineering employers through the Advanced Machinery and Productivity Institute. Leaders include domestic retrofit qualifications to provide learners with the skills they need to move into future careers in construction that align with the green agenda. Leaders work closely with other providers in the area to avoid duplication of provision. This includes A levels and programmes in warehousing and logistics. Stakeholders see Hopwood as a trusted partner.

Leaders have established the college's place within Rochdale. They are passionate about increasing social mobility. They support some of the most disadvantaged groups and those furthest from the job market, particularly non-English speaking residents who benefit greatly from ESOL programmes.

Leaders subcontract to the local authority to fund family learning programmes. This helps parents to learn life skills such as managing family budgets, healthy lifestyles, self-care, and the benefits of the outdoors. Many parents progress to other courses and employment. This changes the lives of people in Rochdale. They are better able to integrate into the community and support their children to reach their full potential in school.

Leaders engage highly effectively with local employers to understand current employment and sector skills needs and are very active in involving a diverse range of employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum. For example, employers assist in the teaching of skills through employer delivered workshops. This includes the importance of dignity in adult care, colour correction in hairdressing and drone surveying in construction.

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

Lecturers and work-based tutors have the appropriate experience and qualifications to teach their subjects. They complete a wide range of training. This includes training in how to be a subject mentor, integrating equality, diversity and inclusion in the classroom and achieving excellence in examinations. This helps to further develop lecturers' teaching skills and subject knowledge. As a result, most learners successfully achieve their qualifications.

Lecturers and work-based tutors carefully consider the content of their subjects and plan their lessons and workshops effectively. For example, health and social care learners learn about human lifespan and how to support individual needs before they learn about psychological perspectives. Fire emergency and security services apprentices learn the components and functions of alarm systems before they practise how to accurately rewire and install different types of alarms. This ensures that learners build their knowledge with easier topics to gain the underpinning knowledge required to understand more difficult concepts.

Learners and apprentices learn new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of the courses they study. For example, animal care learners know that flamingos are pink because of the food that they eat. They learn how to care for the flamboyance of flamingos that live at the Middleton campus. Adults studying the award in education and training know how to carry out initial and diagnostic assessments on their learners and how to plan effective formative and summative assessments. Learners become more confident in their own abilities as they progress through their course.

Most lecturers use assessment well to inform future teaching. For example, learners in GCSE mathematics benefit from frequent recall activities and topics taught on a rotation, with a focus on areas they have not yet mastered. Through these activities, learners demonstrate their current knowledge, which allows lecturers to tackle misunderstandings as they arise. However, in a few cases, such as electrical programmes, lecturers have not ensured that all learners have a secure understanding of the topics they are teaching. A few learners struggle to answer questions and make mistakes in assessments.

Learners with high needs who study across the range of courses provided by the college make good progress. Curriculum and support staff work very well together to ensure that learning is accessible for all. For example, in creative and media, staff adapt equipment so that it is accessible to wheelchair users. However, a small number of learners with complex needs on the foundation life skills programme do not always receive the support required to help them make the progress they could. Staff do not collect enough information about their specific needs and do not have sufficient training to provide effective support.

Most lecturers provide helpful, constructive feedback to learners and apprentices. Feedback informs learners and apprentices of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. However, in a few instances, lecturers do not always correct learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work, which results in them repeating the same mistakes.

Leaders provide a wide range of activities that broaden learners' experiences and increase social mobility. This includes cultural events such as Eid celebrations and a voluntary café where ESOL learners can practise their language skills. Many learners benefit from guest speakers linked to their curriculum, such as the armed forces, who visit public services learners. Leaders encourage learners and apprentices to enter competitions such as Worldskills. Consequently, learners develop personal and social independence skills, as well as the skills they need for their next steps in employment or further learning.

Leaders provide a comprehensive careers programme, which is tailored to the different types of learners at the college. For example, most young learners receive advice on applying to university or further study, apprenticeships and employment. Adult learners can access the same advice as young people due to the inclusion of 'how to' guides on topics such as CV writing and interview skills for those learners who access their learning in the evening. However, a few apprentices in business

and young people studying electrical installation are not fully aware of the opportunities available to them following completion of their studies.

Leaders have a clear oversight of the progress that learners and apprentices make. They monitor and intervene to help students catch up when they fall behind. Leaders identify programmes that underperformed in the previous year, such as a few level 3 programmes and apprenticeships in carpentry and joinery, and fire and security. To improve these programmes, they have put in place a range of actions, such as an increased focus on preparing for final assessments and clearer communication with apprentices' employers. These actions are beginning to have a positive impact on current apprentices and learners, with more remaining on programme and likely to achieve.

Leaders value their staff and take steps to ensure their well-being, welfare and a healthy work-life balance. They recognise the challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. Leaders focus on creating a culture where staff are valued and rewarded while still being held to account for their performance.

Governors are ambitious and committed to the Hopwood vision and values: to provide a high-quality education for learners and apprentices. They are active in the college community and regularly visit curriculum areas to gain an understanding of the experience that learners and apprentices receive. They have an accurate oversight of the quality and effectiveness of education at the college and a clear understanding of most of the college's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff at all levels prioritise the safety and well-being of learners and apprentices. Members of the safeguarding team have the appropriate expertise, qualifications and training to carry out their roles effectively.

Members of the safeguarding team use their procedures effectively to record, action and follow up on concerns. They have a clear oversight of learners who are at risk. Learners are well supported. The safeguarding team make effective use of external agencies to refer concerns beyond its expertise to the appropriate organisation, such as children's' social care.

Leaders provide appropriate training to learners and apprentices, helping them to understand how to keep themselves and others safe. This includes topics such as harmful sexual behaviours, domestic abuse and knife crime. Leaders consider the time of year and provide additional training in relation to the changing risks. For example, they offer training on drink spiking at Christmas and the dangers of drowning when outdoor swimming in the summer.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that staff who work with learners with complex needs receive the appropriate training to enable them to provide effective support that meets the needs of all learners with high needs.
- Leaders should ensure that they improve attendance in the areas where attendance is too low, particularly English and mathematics.
- Leaders should ensure that all lecturers use assessment appropriately to identify gaps in learning so that they can use this information to inform their teaching and help learners to understand key concepts.
- Leaders should ensure that they further embed their careers programme in all curriculum areas so that all learners and apprentices benefit from advice and guidance on their next steps.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130507
Address	Middleton Campus Rochdale Road Middleton Manchester Greater Manchester M24 6XH
Contact number	01616437560
Website	http://www.hopwood.ac.uk/
Principal	Julia Heap
Provider type	General Further Education College
Date of previous inspection	November 2016
Main subcontractors	Rochdale Borough Council Skills Network Rochdale Connections Trust Rochdale Borough Wide Cultural Trust The Calico Group Ltd

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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