

Inspection of RNN Group

Inspection dates: 22 to 25 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

RNN Group is a large general further education group made up of three colleges: Rotherham College, North Nottinghamshire College, and Dearne Valley College. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,488 learners on education programmes for young people and 2,087 learners on adult learning programmes. Learners study on courses from entry level to level 6. There were 842 apprentices, the majority of whom were on level 3 programmes. There were 312 learners identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 157 had high needs. The college works with six subcontractors.

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

Learners and apprentices feel welcome, safe and secure at all college sites. They are frequently provided with age-appropriate information about working safely in different environments, including workplaces. Learners and apprentices have access to a wide range of support to enable them to pursue their learning successfully. Leaders have carefully considered and responded to potential economic barriers to learning. For example, all learners can receive a free breakfast.

Learners and apprentices have a positive understanding of safeguarding and know the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism in their local area. They also learn about other risks such as alcohol misuse, bullying, online risks and hate crime. Apprentices in adult social care not only learn how to keep themselves safe but also how to keep the vulnerable adults they work with in care homes safe.

Learners work well together and demonstrate a high level of respect for each other and their teachers. They develop friendships with peers and discuss topics such as their own and others' cultures and religions.

Learners and apprentices are polite, respectful and open to sharing their experiences. They value their learning and can see how it is developing the skills and attributes that they need to achieve their aspirations.

Learners who need it receive helpful support from well-being champions and mental health first aiders. Leaders support staff well, who in turn support learners and apprentices by caring about their health and well-being. Staff provide useful support to those experiencing mental health difficulties. Staff, learners and apprentices can speak to a clinically trained specialist via an online platform.

Learners benefit from teachers and assessors who have good levels of vocational experience and expertise. Staff take part in frequent industrial updating to keep their vocational knowledge and practice current. This training ensures that learners and apprentices are taught relevant and up-to-date vocational content and practice.

Learners develop a range of personal skills that help them to build their confidence and resilience. Staff implement a wide range of project-based activities to support the progress of learners with high needs. Staff plan activities so that learners work well together, which fosters a very supportive learning environment.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers engage well with a wide range of employers and stakeholders. In a number of areas, this is well established, such as in engineering where staff work closely with the National Fluid Power Centre to develop a relevant curriculum offer. Leaders and managers have a sound understanding of the skills

needs of the people and communities they work with across two very different regions. They have developed positive relationships with other local education providers through being part of the South Yorkshire College Partnership and working with local schools to support young people's transition to further education, particularly for children who are looked after and young people with SEND.

Leaders and managers have in place a range of appropriate arrangements to engage stakeholders in the design and implementation of most parts of the curriculum. In a few areas, this is well established and successfully integrated into the way the curriculum is planned and taught. For example, in media make-up, staff use client briefs for live productions and shows. Learners are also involved in simulated major incident days delivered by uniformed services in the local region. In a few other areas, leaders rightly recognise that the level of employer engagement is not yet strong enough, and employers do not contribute fully enough to curriculum design.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of provision that they offer to learners and apprentices. The curriculum is well considered and ambitious in offering a wide range of progression pathways from entry level to level 6, enabling learners and apprentices to progress to further study, training or employment. For young people who are at risk of not engaging in education, employment or training, leaders have designed the 'careers pathway' programme, which aims to re-engage these young people in learning and improve their confidence.

On education programmes for young people, teachers design and sequence the curriculum so that learners acquire relevant new knowledge and skills from solid foundations. In childcare, learners study how children develop physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively before moving on to designing play activities. In bricklaying, practical assignment work becomes more challenging and complex, including setting out and constructing semi-circular and segmental arches. As they progress through the curriculum, learners in bricklaying successfully gain fluency in their practical brickwork skills.

Leaders and managers make informed decisions to work with selected subcontractors to deliver programmes to 16- to 18-year-olds, adults and apprentices. They carefully assess where subcontractors can support them to meet specific local and regional skill priorities. For example, they work with Construction Skills People to provide construction programmes for ex-offenders in the Worksop area and with JTL Training People to provide electrical installation apprenticeships, which is a high priority area nationally.

Staff ensure that learners with high needs and SEND who are enrolled on vocational and academic programmes receive effective support. Teachers and support staff use specialised tools, such as colour overlays and text speak, so that learners who

require them can participate fully in class. Teachers flex the curriculum and assessment approaches to support adult social care apprentices with neurodiversity or dyslexia needs by, for example, increasing the use of professional discussion and reducing the requirement to provide written responses. Apprentices with dyslexia benefit from adapted assessments that require less writing.

Staff establish learners' and apprentices' starting points accurately in most programmes at the college. The majority of teachers use these effectively to plan appropriate learning and support for learners and apprentices. However, in business administration, although learners' starting points in English and mathematics are assessed and established when they enrol at the college, vocational course leaders and teachers do not receive the results of these. As a result, they are not able to plan any specific support or learning activities for individual learners that would help them to address gaps in their knowledge and skills in these subjects.

Most tutors and assessors use assessment well to ensure that learners and apprentices are making the progress that they should in gaining the new knowledge and skills required by the curriculum. Teachers provide adult learners with helpful coaching and feedback to help them to improve. In a few cases, feedback is not specific enough to enable learners to develop their academic writing skills.

Learners respond well to clear instructions and complete their classwork purposefully. For example, in health science lessons, teachers provide a variety of learning activities in which all learners actively participate, particularly through group discussions and peer learning. Level 2 motor vehicle apprentices respond positively to the well-ordered workshops and recognise the importance of tidy working, taking pride in the care of their own tools.

Leaders and staff provide most learners with helpful careers advice and guidance. This support is available to learners throughout their time at college. Learners participate in discussions and research through their tutorial programmes in order to prepare for their next steps. For example, learners in level 3 gaming completed a curriculum vitae (CV) and attended an interview at a high-profile digital employment agency. They received very helpful feedback from the employer on their interviews and CVs that provided them with guidance on how they can improve and meet the high expectations of the industry. As a result of the advice and guidance that they receive, most learners are able to make informed choices about their next steps. However, a few learners on level 1 courses have only a superficial awareness of the specific steps that they need to take to apply for apprenticeship opportunities.

Staff work successfully with employers to identify suitable opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful external work experience. A high proportion of younger learners participate in and benefit from these. In construction, learners are engaged in a variety of repair and maintenance projects with local charities, and in joinery, learners have constructed pig pens for land-based provision.

Staff provide very good support to learners and apprentices to develop their confidence and resilience through the wider curriculum. Learners participate in a

range of competitions, including inter-college competitions between local colleges and WorldSkills competitions, at which a number of learners have achieved medal placings. Learners on an independent-living course host a luncheon club for local older people. Learners frequently take part in fundraising events for local charities, working in collaboration with Nature Recovery Rotherham to host the Hedgehog Conservation event and volunteering at food banks.

Attendance across the college is lower than the targets set by leaders. In response to this, leaders have put in place measures to improve attendance, such as identifying reasons for non-attendance and implementing the 'RNN Inspire' programme. They have also taken steps to understand the reasons for poor attendance, which include learners struggling financially or feeling anxious about coming to college and disruptions to public transport. Managers have liaised with bus companies regarding bus routes, provided bursaries for learners and assigned anxious learners with buddies to accompany them at college. They have also applied college-wide approaches to improving attendance, including actively promoting to learners the link between high attendance and high grades and the importance of English and mathematics for gaining employment. These interventions are beginning to have a positive impact.

Governance is effective. The board of governors is comprised of members who have high levels of expertise and who successfully ensure that the quality of education and safeguarding is prioritised. Board members carefully scrutinise reports and data to ensure that they provide effective support, scrutiny and challenge, including the work and use of subcontractors. This contributes to ensuring that leaders maintain their strong focus on rapid and continuous improvement, particularly in relation to the few curriculum areas that need to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers conduct appropriate background checks on staff during recruitment to ensure that all staff, including those at subcontractors, are suitable to work with learners. Staff complete mandatory training in safeguarding, 'Prevent' duty and equality and diversity so that they can recognise signs of abuse and know how to report concerns. Leaders ensure that staff have read and understood relevant statutory guidance on safeguarding.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff provide useful information to learners and apprentices about sexual violence, abuse and harassment through sessions delivered by progress coaches. As a result, learners and apprentices have a good understanding of what these terms mean and what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. They know who to report concerns to, and any concerns that are reported are dealt with quickly.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that the attendance and punctuality of learners and apprentices continues to improve.
- Take action swiftly to improve curriculum areas that are not yet at the standard required by leaders.
- Ensure that information collected about learners and apprentices at the start of their course is used by all teachers to support learners and apprentices to make rapid progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130527
Address	Town Centre Campus Eastwood Lane Rotherham S65 1EG
Contact number	01709 362111
Website	www.rnngroup.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jason Austin
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	19 to 22 March 2019
Main subcontractors	Solvo Vir Construction Skills People Rotherham Creative Learning Centre Rotherham United Community Sports Trust GB Creative JTL Training People

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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