

# Wigan and Leigh College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

8–11 November 2016

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders and governors have successfully improved the outcomes for learners and the quality of the provision.
- There has been a steady and sustained improvement in achievement rates for learners across all types of provision, age groups and levels of qualification.
- 16- to 19-year-old learners on level 3 vocational courses now make better progress from their initial starting points.
- Standards of learners' work are high, and learners are proud of what they produce.
- Senior leaders work collaboratively with a wide range of partners to develop new qualifications to meet the region's skills needs.
- Vigorous performance management drives improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers and teachers are passionate about raising the aspirations of learners, so that the great majority progress onto their next step in education and employment.
- Teachers use a good range of activities to motivate and enthuse learners, with the result that they enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Teachers engage enthusiastically in the development of their teaching skills and readily share good practice among themselves.
- A high proportion of learners benefit from work-related learning and work experience to develop good employability skills.
- Learners behave well in classes and around the college, and have a good appetite to learn.
- Staff support learners with high needs exceptionally well so that they are included fully in the life of the college and develop good independent living skills.
- Although more 16- to 19-year-old learners are now completing their courses, retention rates are still too low.
- Not enough apprentices achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales.
- Teachers and tutors do not set targets that challenge the more able learners to improve in a minority of lessons.
- Too few learners improve their grades in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Learners' attendance has improved but remains too low in English and mathematics classes.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Wigan and Leigh College is a large general further education college with three main centres in Wigan and two in Leigh. The borough of Wigan and Leigh has a population of 322,000. A higher proportion of the population in the borough is employed in manufacturing compared to the wider North West region and the rest of the country. Unemployment in the borough is lower than in the rest of the region and the country. A large proportion of the population are outside the labour market due to long-term sickness.
- The population in Wigan and Leigh has a lower proportion of people with qualifications at level four and above, and a higher proportion with low qualifications, than other boroughs in the region and the rest of the country.

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

- Managers need to speed up their actions to improve the retention of 16- to 19-year-old learners.
- Managers and assessors should improve the use of initial assessment to enable them to set more precise and developmental targets for apprentices attending off-the-job training at the college so that more apprentices achieve their qualifications within planned timescales.
- Teachers need to plan additional activities into their lessons so that they challenge more able learners to extend their skills and knowledge further.
- Managers and teachers need to focus relentlessly on improving attendance at English and mathematics classes; they also need to track the progress of learners taking English and mathematics GCSE qualifications more rigorously, so that they can provide additional support for those learners who are falling behind.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The college's senior leaders are ambitious in their drive for improvement. Since the last inspection, they have successfully overseen improvements in learner outcomes, the quality of provision and the sustainability of the college's financial position.
- Effective performance management is central to the college's culture of continuous improvement. Governors, leaders and managers tackle underperformance unremittingly. Teachers and assessors feel well supported by managers to improve their practice through regular and relevant continuous professional development.
- Leaders and managers accurately identify the majority of areas for improvement through a comprehensive self-assessment process. This enables them to tackle areas for improvement, such as the application of information learning technologies to enhance learning and assessment. Managers recognise where they still need to make further improvements, for example in planning learning better so that it challenges more able learners to extend their skills and understanding further.
- Managers and teachers ensure that the development of English and mathematics has a high profile across the college. Curriculum changes to study programmes ensure that learners have greater opportunities to achieve English and mathematics GCSEs. Provision for adults supports a local priority to improve English and mathematical skills to enable learners to progress into employment. However, achievement rates in these subjects have yet to improve sufficiently.
- Senior leaders and managers collaborate effectively to develop new provision to support regional skills priorities. Examples include a pre-access to nursing qualification developed with the National Health Service (NHS) and a nuclear waste higher apprenticeship developed with Sellafield. Partnership work with local schools has led to a revised A-level and vocational offer at level 3 to meet the needs of the population in Leigh.
- Staff at all levels skilfully promote the value of diversity, so that students demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance towards each other. The integration of learners with high needs into mainstream college life is highly effective. Managers identify underperformance of groups of learners and act quickly to tackle inequality in achievement.

### The governance of the provider

- Governors are committed to the success of the college and have recently revised their structure to allow for greater scrutiny of curriculum performance. Governors are beginning to challenge the senior team effectively about the progress made on areas for improvement. However, the quality of management information that governors receive is not yet sharp enough to enable them to identify the full impact of certain improvement actions, such as those taken to retain more 16- to 19-year-old learners on their courses.
- Link governor visits provide a good insight into the experience of learners in areas selected by the corporation for scrutiny, and are an effective way of improving governors' understanding of the work of the college.

## Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is effective. Appropriate policies effectively promote safe working practices in classrooms, workshops and the workplace. Learners feel very safe in the college, and are clear about how, and to whom, they report any concerns. Staff respond quickly and appropriately to reported incidents. College staff work extensively with external agencies to support vulnerable learners and refer them to additional services, such as counselling and financial advice.
- Learners on the college's large study programme provision develop a good understanding of the relevance of the 'Prevent' duty and British values to their everyday lives. However, apprentices are less aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism than other learners.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers use a good range of activities to interest and motivate learners. Consequently, learners enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- Teachers and assessors have good subject knowledge, which reflects current industry standards. Teachers and tutors use their knowledge well to help learners develop good industrial and professional practices to meet employers' needs.
- Teachers and tutors assess learners' progress and performance well during lessons and within individual tutorials. Personal tutors identify when learners fall behind with their work and intervene swiftly to get them back on course.
- In the majority of lessons for 16- to 19-year-old learners and adult learners, teachers use questioning effectively to assess learners' understanding. However, assessors on the college's directly delivered off-the-job training were less effective in their use of directed questioning to develop apprentices' knowledge and understanding fully.
- Teachers effectively encourage learners to be reflective about their work and to consider how they could improve it further. Teachers encourage peer review to help learners become more evaluative about the quality of their own work by assessing that of others.
- Overall support for learners during lessons is good. Teachers deploy learning support assistants well to help the least able learners achieve their learning goals.
- Resources and accommodation to support learning were generally good. In vocational subjects, accommodation reflected industry standards; for example, in hairdressing and beauty, salons replicated those found on the high street.
- Learners have access to a good virtual learning environment which supports them well in being able to study independently between learning sessions. Learners and staff make extensive use of a newly introduced secure media application to increase their opportunities to learn outside the classroom using college online resources.
- Managers and teachers effectively involve employers and parents to plan learning and keep them informed of learners' attendance and progress.
- Teachers and tutors promote equality and raise awareness of diversity skilfully during lessons. They use topical subjects, such as the recent Presidential election in America, to stimulate debates on the principles of democracy, tolerance and respect.

- Teachers are highly effective in developing their learners' practical application of English and mathematical skills to their vocational subjects. For example, hairdressing and beauty therapy learners calculate ratios for use in hair colouring, and learners on construction workshops ensure that measurements of materials link to pricing and profitability.
- On study programmes, teachers' feedback on written work was effective in informing learners about what they need to do to improve. However, for apprentices, assessors' written feedback was insufficiently developmental.
- Teachers make good use of the college's professional development opportunities. They are very keen to develop their own teaching skills and apply what they have learned to their lessons. Training on behaviour management has significantly improved how teachers conduct their lessons.
- Teachers and tutors in a minority of sessions do not set targets that challenge the more able learners to improve further.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Attitudes to learning are good and learners enjoy their learning. Learners are confident and self-assured. They take pride in and are keen to talk about their work.
- A high proportion of learners benefit from purposeful work-related learning and work experience that helps them to develop a good understanding of the world of work. Teachers use realistic project briefs that give learners a good understanding of commercial pressures.
- Learners develop good standards of vocational skills that enhance their prospects of future employment. Teachers with recent vocational experience use the knowledge of their industries to advise learners on possible career options.
- Learners demonstrate good standards of behaviour, both in classes and around the college. Learners are clear about what is acceptable behaviour and understand the need for it to be consistently enforced.
- Good enrichment and non-accredited activities, such as participating in the student council and voluntary work, support learners in the development of their personal, social and employability skills.
- Learners receive effective information, advice and guidance during tutorials and have access to impartial careers advice that equips them with a good understanding of their next steps in education and employment.
- Learners have a good understanding of British values. They work well in groups and have respect for their teachers and fellow learners.
- Learners' overall attendance has improved compared to this time last year, but remains low in English and mathematics and in some adult learning courses.

### Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Managers and teachers have achieved steady, sustained increases in achievement rates for learners of all age groups, across all provision types and qualifications. They are

passionate about raising the aspirations of learners to achieve and progress, and their commitment has led to improved outcomes.

- Achievement rates for 16- to 19-year-olds have increased since the last inspection and are now above the national rate. Achievement rates have increased at all levels, particularly for learners at entry level and levels 1 and 2. Learners' achievement rates on level 3 diploma qualifications, which comprise the largest proportion of learners on study programmes, have improved by five percentage points in 2015/16.
- Learners on study programmes now make better progress from their initial starting points, with learners in public service, creative media and art and design progressing particularly well.
- Achievement rates for adults have improved over the past two years and are now just below the national rate. A greater proportion of adults achieve their access to higher education qualifications than previously and the majority progress into higher education.
- Success rates on the college's growing apprenticeship programme are now in line with national rates, starting from a very low base two years ago. Although the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within planned timescales is now just over the national rate, too many still do not complete on time.
- Achievement rates for learners with high needs, such as learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are exceptionally high. Learners develop good independent learning and living skills. The great majority progress further in education, and in a small number of cases onto apprenticeships and employment.
- Standards of learners work are very high. Many learners on study programmes produce work of a quality well beyond their qualification level, winning prestigious national competitions and commissions in fashion, art and design and digital media.
- Managers are quick to identify and close any gaps in attainment between groups of learners. The progress of male learners compared to females on level 3 vocational programmes improved in 2015/16.
- Learners' progression between levels is good. The great majority of learners move on to positive destinations after their courses, such as further study or employment.
- More learners are now completing their courses, but retention rates remain below national figures, particularly for 16- to 19-year-old learners.
- Very few learners, of all age groups, improve their grades at GCSE in English and mathematics. However, the achievement rates of learners taking functional skills qualifications in these subjects at entry and level 1 have increased.
- In a few subjects, such as engineering, achievement rates have remained low over time.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- The college has 2,293 learners aged 16 to 19 on a range of vocational study programmes from entry level up to level 4 across 12 subject areas. The subjects with the most significant learner numbers are health, public services and care; arts, media and

publishing; construction and planning; and retail and commercial enterprise. A small initial cohort of learners are enrolled on recently reintroduced A-level courses.

- Teachers have high expectations of their learners on vocational courses, with the result that they motivate the majority of their learners to make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers' feedback on written assessments is constructive and developmental, so learners understand what they have to do to improve.
- Learners develop good practical skills that equip them for the workplace. For example in hairdressing and beauty therapy sessions learners practise organisational skills when they play the role of salon manager.
- Teachers promote high standards of health and safety in lessons, so that learners know how to work safely with tools, equipment and chemicals and when to apply the correct personal protection equipment to each task.
- Learners benefit from the college's extensive contacts with employers to undertake good quality work experience and work placement opportunities. Learners from the college's sports academies find placements with professional football and rugby league clubs in the region and in Europe.
- Managers design courses of study effectively for each individual learner, with clear progression pathways. A high proportion of those completing their studies progress to their planned educational and career goals.
- Information, advice and guidance are impartial and comprehensive prior to and during the learners' programmes. Tutors and advisors build effectively upon learners' prior attainment and career aspirations to support progression to future employment, training and education.
- Teachers make good use of detailed information on the initial starting points of their learners to plan lessons that effectively meet the needs of the majority. They set appropriate learning targets, and managers and teachers monitor the achievement of these closely to ensure good progress. However, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan sufficient extension activities and set ambitious targets to challenge the more able learners.
- Teachers develop learners' applied mathematical and English oral skills effectively in most lessons. For example, learners prepare and deliver presentations to large groups to practise their communication skills. However, in a significant number of lessons, teachers do not pay close attention to the development of learners' written English skills.
- Managers' implementation of new strategies to improve attendance and the progress of learners on English and mathematics GCSE course has brought some improvement. However, too many learners still do not make sufficient progress from their starting points in these subjects.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- A total of 2,272 adult learners attend the college, with more than half on discrete adult courses and the rest spread between community learning programmes, courses for learners who have taken out adult loans, study programmes and the access to higher

education programme. Adults follow programmes in a wide range of subjects including business, accounting, floristry, sport, health and social care, construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and English and mathematics.

- The majority of learners achieve their qualifications, learn well, make good progress and can describe the skills they develop in a wide range of subjects.
- A large majority of learners evaluate and reflect on their progress and how they can further improve. For example, adults on a plumbing course can clearly explain how they adjusted the angle of a drainpipe to allow water to drain away.
- The very large majority of learners are well motivated to learn, take pride in their work and work independently. Many learners ask for additional homework from their teachers.
- The vast majority of teachers have high expectations of what their learners can achieve through their studies. Learners on a hairdressing and beauty therapy course, for example, want to own their own salons in the future.
- Teachers provide good developmental feedback on learners' written work, with the result that their vocational knowledge and understanding increases. Teachers encourage the frequent use of dictionaries and give constructive comments to learners on how to improve their grammar and spelling.
- Teachers develop learners' mathematical skills effectively. Access learners develop the mathematical skills they need for university entrance tests and understand why mathematics will be important in their future careers such as nursing.
- Adults have clear career plans linked to their studies and receive a range of impartial careers advice from teachers and tutors. Most achieve positive destinations when they leave the college and progress to university, further education or employment.
- Learners develop good employability skills and work to industry standards. For example, learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy understand the need to keep to time with client treatments in order to maximise commercial profit.
- Adults with additional learning support needs receive very good pastoral, academic and financial support to help them learn and achieve their goals.
- Adult learners can participate in all aspects of the study programme, including English and mathematics; this enables them to develop their vocational and employability skills in subject areas where identified skills shortages exist in the region.
- In the majority of sessions teachers do not plan sufficiently well to challenge the more able learners with more advanced work, and checks on the learning for the less able minority are insufficient.
- The processes for monitoring the progress of learners on the small community-funded programme are weak. Teachers do not use learners' starting points to plan individualised learning or set appropriate targets to monitor progress.

## Apprenticeships

## Requires improvement

- The college has 1,526 apprentices on programme, of whom about a third are aged under 18, a fifth are aged 19 to 23, and the remainder are over 24 years old. The great majority are on intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes, with a small minority of

adult apprentices on higher apprenticeships. The college delivers the majority of apprenticeships directly, with a minority placed with subcontractors. Most apprentices follow programmes in engineering, construction, health and social care, business and management.

- Despite the recent actions of managers resulting in an improvement in both the overall and timely success rates of apprentices, the proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programmes within planned timescales remains too low.
- In the majority of off-the-job training sessions, assessors do not use initial assessment and prior attainment effectively to plan individualised programmes or learning activities. Consequently, off-the-job training fails to challenge and extend workplace knowledge and skills sufficiently, and limits the progress of more able learners.
- In most off-the-job training, apprentices do not sufficiently develop their broader employability skills beyond the minimum requirements for the qualification. As a result, in only a minority of sessions do they make the progress necessary to produce work of a high industry standard.
- Assessors do not set challenging, skills-focused learning targets that encourage apprentices to improve their workplace skills. Too frequently, they set limited targets in line with the expectations for competence set out in qualification frameworks.
- In the majority of instances, assessors' written feedback contains insufficient detail to enable apprentices to understand how to improve their work further.
- Assessment in the majority of off-the-job training sessions is not sufficiently challenging. Assessors' questioning fails to probe thoroughly to test apprentices' understanding or deepen and broaden their knowledge.
- The majority of apprentices and employers do not have a well-developed awareness and understanding of the threats of extremism and radicalisation. Few can explain how they can play an active role in implementing the 'Prevent' duty.
- Managers develop the apprenticeship programmes effectively to meet the skills needs of local employers. As a result, the majority of apprentices who complete their qualifications secure sustained employment.
- Assessors have good subject knowledge and technical expertise, and most work effectively with employers to develop apprentices' work place skills. In engineering, the majority of apprentices produce practical work of a very high standard and demonstrate skills development beyond the expectations set out in qualification frameworks. Employers invest in additional training for apprentices, such as in plasma cutting.
- Assessors and teachers support apprentices to develop their mathematical skills further, and challenge them to apply these skills in their vocational settings, such as the use of advanced geometry to solve complex problems in fabrication.
- Assessment of on-the-job skills is effective. Assessors encourage apprentices to apply their knowledge to work-related situations and demonstrate understanding in new or unfamiliar tasks. For example, apprentices independently calculate and mix colours for clients in hairdressing.
- The majority of apprentices are motivated and participate actively in their learning. They attend regularly and display positive attitudes towards their training.

- Apprentices show respect for, and value the opinion of, staff and their peers. They have a good understanding of equality and diversity and how these themes may affect their practice in the workplace. For example, catering apprentices are aware of the influence of religious beliefs on the products they use when baking cakes and making pastries.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130521
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	10,143
Principal/CEO	Anna Dawe
Telephone number	01942 761800
Website	<a href="http://www.wigan-leigh.ac.uk">www.wigan-leigh.ac.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4 or above				
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18 316	19+ 604	16–18 1,003	19+ 1,171	16–18 1,149	19+ 582	16–18 56	19+ 651
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18 394	19+ 429	16–18 209	19+ 600	16–18 1	19+ 116		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	27							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Groundwork Trust</li> <li>■ Progress Sport</li> <li>■ Power in Partnership</li> <li>■ North West Skills Academy</li> <li>■ The Skills Network</li> </ul>							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal curriculum as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Dr Charles Searle, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Miller	Her Majesty's Inspector
Thomas Fay	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Duncan	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Bruce	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Bullock	Ofsted Inspector
Marina Gaze	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Bramley	Ofsted Inspector

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