

Inspection of Nottingham College

Inspection dates: 14–17 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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| The quality of education | Requires improvement |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Requires improvement |
| Personal development | Requires improvement |
| Leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Education programmes for young people | Requires improvement |
| Adult learning programmes | Requires improvement |
| Apprenticeships | Requires improvement |
| Provision for learners with high needs | Requires improvement |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected |

Information about this provider

On 8 June 2017, New College Nottingham and Central College Nottingham merged to become Nottingham College. This very large college is the only general further education college in the city. It operates from the Adams Building in Nottingham's Lace Market, and from Basford, Beeston High Road, Clarendon, High Pavement Sixth Form, Highfields, London Road, Maid Marian Way, Stapleford, Stoney Street, Wheeler Gate and Ruddington.

The college currently provides education and training to 6,286 young learners, 8,156 adults and 1,975 apprentices. It offers classroom-based courses in all major subject areas from entry level through to higher education. Framework and standards apprenticeships are offered in business, construction, education, engineering and manufacturing, health and care, information technology, leisure, and retail. Most apprentices study at level 2 and level 3, with a small number of higher level apprentices in health and construction. The college works with seven main subcontractors, which provide classroom-based programmes to adults and a small number of young learners.

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

Learners and apprentices have a mixed experience at the college. The quality of classroom teaching varies between different subjects. Staffing difficulties mean that a small minority of apprentices do not have enough access to skilled tutors, and their progress is too slow as a result.

Most learners enjoy coming to college. They find it a pleasant and welcoming place. Reflecting this, their behaviour is positive. Many are eager to learn, attend frequently and punctually, and work hard, both within and outside lessons. However, a small minority are persistently absent and show a lack of enthusiasm for their studies.

Teachers often do not make learners work hard enough. Although most learners do not complain about this, it means that they do not develop their knowledge and skills sufficiently to achieve the highest possible grades, and to prepare for their next steps.

Learners and apprentices feel safe when attending the college or when in the workplace. They are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe and are confident that any concerns that they raise will be dealt with effectively by staff.

Learners with high levels of support needs benefit from specialist staff who use their expertise well to understand and plan to meet learners' requirements.

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

Too often, managers and staff aim to meet the minimum requirements of qualifications. They do not consider sufficiently the specific knowledge and skills that learners and apprentices need for their next steps in education and employment. However, apprentices in transportation operations benefit from detailed work undertaken with a number of motor vehicle manufacturers. This enables teachers to equip these apprentices with a range of specialist skills, which helps them to secure and sustain employment in the sector.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge that they use well to plan courses logically and to provide clear explanations of topics. However, in a small number of apprenticeship subjects, such as health and social care, and engineering, managers struggle to recruit specialist staff. As a result, apprentices are not always taught by experts and their progress is slow.

Too many teachers and trainers do not challenge learners enough. Although teachers often have high ambitions for learners, too often this is not reflected in their teaching. Many fail to use assessment frequently enough for learners and apprentices to develop their knowledge and skills. Where they do assess learners, they often fail to provide feedback that is sufficiently precise and helpful. They do not routinely provide guidance that helps learners to improve their writing. Too

often, the quality of learners' work is not as good as it ought to be. They do not achieve the grades of which they are capable or develop their knowledge and skills to the extent that they could. However, most pass their qualifications.

The extent to which teachers check learners' and apprentices' understanding of topics during lessons varies considerably and in too many cases is not thorough enough. Teachers of access to higher education courses do not check understanding effectively. In early years, teachers check that learners understand the information they have just presented but do not do enough to check that they can remember material from earlier in their courses. In GCSE mathematics, teachers use a range of quizzes and exercises to ensure that learners can both understand and remember topics.

Leaders and managers use high needs funding effectively. They use most of this funding to provide specialist staff who help learners with high needs to participate fully in learning. These experts also train other staff to support learners more effectively.

Most learners and apprentices are studious, listen to their teachers and follow instructions well. They arrive on time to lessons and are ready to work. They are respectful towards others. Many learners complete additional study outside their lessons. However, in a few areas, such as business studies, too many learners are not punctual, lack focus and have a poor attitude to learning.

A small minority of learners are persistently absent and staff do not do enough to support them. Too many learners do not attend English and mathematics lessons often enough. Leaders have identified poor school performance in Nottingham in these subjects and have made them a priority for the college. However, managers do not take effective action to address the problem.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that staff will respond to any concerns raised.

Too few learners have a sufficiently detailed understanding of British values. Staff do not consistently implement the comprehensive tutorial programme, which is intended to help learners to become informed and active citizens. Too many learners find tutorials uninteresting or irrelevant and do not attend. Apprentices, however, develop a good knowledge of British values and how these apply to their employment and private lives.

Learners have access to effective, impartial careers information and advice to help them plan their next steps. However, too many young learners do not know how to make best use of this service.

Leaders and managers evaluate the curriculum accurately and take action to raise standards. However, they do not always focus on the day-to-day issues teachers and learners face and as a result, their actions do not have enough impact.

Leaders work well to develop teachers' skills and knowledge. Managers use their links with employers to support teachers to update their vocational skills.

Managers do not use their quality assurance arrangements well enough to monitor the provision for learners on subcontracted programmes. Although their quality framework is comprehensive, managers do not apply it robustly and although most subcontractors provide high-quality education and training, a couple do not.

Governors do not have enough impact on the quality of education. They are well qualified, highly experienced and understand their roles well. They support and challenge leaders, but they have focused on resolving the challenges created by the recent merger.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and managers have established appropriate policies and procedures to help keep young people and vulnerable adults safe. They ensure that all pre-employment checks are completed before staff start working for the college. Staff and governors undertake suitable safeguarding training at frequent intervals. Security arrangements at the different sites are appropriate. Staff work effectively with a range of support agencies and the local authority to help keep learners safe and in education and training.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should work with teachers to ensure that they identify the specific knowledge and skills that learners need. They should identify clearly what high performance looks like for learners and what additional skills and knowledge, beyond the requirements of qualifications, they need in order to be successful in their next steps.
- Leaders and managers should help teachers to develop their skills in checking that learners understand and can recall topics. They should work with teachers to develop their use of formative assessment and feedback to develop learners' knowledge and skills.
- All staff should take more assertive action to improve the attendance of those learners who are persistently absent. Managers should ensure that college procedures are followed.
- Managers should resolve the remaining staffing difficulties in apprenticeships as a matter of urgency.
- Managers and teachers should further develop the tutorial curriculum so that it engages the interest of learners and helps them to develop a fuller understanding of themes related to life in modern Britain.
- Managers should ensure that all young learners access and make use of the available careers information, advice and guidance.
- Governors should give more attention to the quality of education at the college.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 130776 |
| Address | Adams Building Stoney Street Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG1 1NG |
| Contact number | 0115 910 0100 |
| Website | www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk |
| CEO | John van de Laarschot |
| Provider type | General further education college |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Main subcontractors | The White Rose School of Beauty Learning Curve (JAA) Limited Free to Learn GRA (GB) Limited People Plus Aspire Sporting Academy Expressions Academy of Performing Arts |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal (curriculum and learning), as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection reports. 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 observing 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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