

Inspection of Wiltshire College and University Centre

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Wiltshire College and University Centre (WCUC) has four campuses based in Chippenham, Lackham, Salisbury and Trowbridge. At the time of the inspection, around 3,000 learners aged 16 to 18 years, 4,000 adult learners, 2,000 apprentices and 350 learners with high needs were studying at the college.

Learners study a wide range of vocational training courses from entry level to level 3 and apprenticeship programmes from level 2 to level 7. Most learners aged 16 to 18 years study a qualification in English and/or mathematics, construction, engineering, creative arts, healthcare or animal care. Most adults study healthcare, preparation for work, learning and life courses, construction or teaching assistant courses. Most apprentices study carpentry and joinery at level 2, or electrical, business administration or senior healthcare support worker at level 3.

The college works with three main subcontractors, which provide adult learning programmes.

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

Learners and apprentices are motivated to do well and achieve their goals. Staff model professional behaviours well and have high expectations. For example, apprentices on the senior healthcare worker apprenticeship develop a strong work ethic as a result of their trainers' modelling of high expectations. Young learners on a beauty and spa treatment programme enthusiastically emulate their teachers' professionalism in providing treatments. As a result, learners and apprentices grow in confidence and are ambitious to apply for a job role or a course at a higher level.

Learners and apprentices study in a caring and nurturing environment. Teachers and trainers skilfully create a calm and inclusive atmosphere in classrooms and workshops. Learners and apprentices are taught well about the importance of equality and diversity. For example, young learners studying a games development programme create video game characters of underrepresented groups of people.

Most young learners take opportunities that enrich their learning through insightful experiences with industry. As a result, they develop a better understanding of the skills they need to be successful in their chosen vocation. For example, young learners studying an animal care programme visit a cat and dog rescue centre to develop their understanding of animal welfare legislation. However, learners with high needs studying vocational pathway programmes do not all receive these same opportunities. As a result, they do not all have encounters with the world of work as part of their curriculum.

Most learners and apprentices have a positive attitude towards their education or training. Adult learners are well supported by their teachers to help them to overcome the personal challenges that many face. For example, Ukrainian refugees studying on the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programme receive one-to-one teaching and use well-designed online learning resources to help ensure that they make swift progress. However, the attendance and punctuality of young learners for lessons in English and mathematics is too low, and a minority of them become demotivated and disengaged with their learning activities.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They develop new knowledge about how to protect themselves. For example, learners with high needs learn about the risks associated with sharing their personal information online.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a clear strategic focus that aligns well to the current and future skills required by the communities that the college serves. Leaders are well informed about these skills needs through their effective engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, such as the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Wiltshire Council. As a result, leaders respond positively by providing education and training opportunities for those who need to learn new skills. For example, managers have responded very well to an identified need in Wiltshire for more construction workers, working with charities such as Building Heroes to meet this need. This is a building and construction programme that is tailored to the needs of military veterans seeking to enter the labour market.

Leaders and managers use the information they have about the labour market to ensure that they contribute to meeting skills needs. As a result, most managers provide a well-designed curriculum that meets the needs of the different groups of learners in the different localities the college serves. For example, through the provision of ESOL programmes, managers ensure that the college meets the English language skills needs of the growing number of adults moving to the areas that it serves. Managers ensure that training programmes are well targeted through effective partnership working with the Job Centre Plus and local community organisations, such as Chippenham Community Hub.

WCUC is highly valued by many different stakeholders in a large geographical area. For example, a collaboration between WCUC, Salisbury Healthcare NHS Trust and a higher education institution is seeking to deal with the future skills shortages in health education and technology.

Leaders do not involve employers sufficiently in planning the curriculum for younger learners across all subject areas. Not all programme managers involve employers well enough in designing and teaching the curriculum in, for example, art and design. College forums, which were highly valued by employer groups, have also lapsed.

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

Leaders and governors have made positive change to the curriculum for most learners. They promote effectively a culture of transparency. Leaders have established processes that link well to individual learners' and apprentices' experiences. For example, leaders have provided effective support to rapidly improve the curriculum in vocational areas such as motor sport.

Leaders and managers have created purposeful vocational curriculums with well-considered progression routes. As a result, most learners and apprentices develop

the vocational skills they need to move on to their training or career goals. Teachers and trainers carefully select learning activities to help prepare learners and apprentices well to progress straight into a job role or on to a course of further study in their chosen vocational area. For example, young learners studying a motor sport programme develop important project management and research skills through activities that meet their interests, such as building a soap box derby car. However, in a number of curriculum areas, employers do not play a sufficiently prominent role in designing the curriculum.

Teachers and trainers use their wealth of knowledge to support learners and apprentices well. They keep up to date with the latest developments in their vocational area and use this knowledge effectively in their lessons. Most teachers and trainers provide learners and apprentices with an appropriate level of challenge for their level and stage of study. For example, apprentices studying a general farmworker apprenticeship at level 2 learn how to provide high levels of welfare to animals. As a result, these apprentices can apply this new knowledge to their workplace and become more proficient in their job role.

Learners and apprentices link effectively the new theory and practical skills they learn to their chosen careers. As a result, they are confident using the specialist knowledge and skills that reflect current industry requirements. Teachers and trainers are specialists in their subject areas and are highly experienced. For example, teachers in GCSE mathematics provide young learners studying a construction programme with real examples from a construction workplace. This helps them to understand the importance of calculating perimeters and areas of quadrilaterals. As a result, learners and apprentices can successfully apply abstract theories to their vocational course or workplace.

The curriculum for learners with high needs is insufficiently ambitious, and too few learners receive the specialist support they require. As a result, too many learners with high needs make slow progress. Leaders have recently taken appropriate action to improve the consistency of the support provided to these learners and to make the curriculum more ambitious in vocational areas of the college. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Not all learners benefit from high-quality careers guidance. Too many adults and learners with high needs do not have enough understanding at an early enough stage in their programme to make well-informed decisions. For example, too few learners with high needs access specialist careers support to make decisions about their future options.

Most young learners and adults are prepared well by their teachers to undertake work experience. As a result, learners improve their specialist knowledge and understanding and are inspired to learn more about their vocational area. For example, young learners studying a beauty and spa therapy programme learn how

to establish professional boundaries when providing treatments to clients. Managers work well with the Department for Work and Pensions and local employers to provide adult learners studying an employability course with work experience in healthcare. As a result of this effective arrangement, these learners are given a guaranteed job interview.

Leaders and managers make good use of subcontracted provision for adult learning programmes and apprenticeships to meet local skills gaps. A significant minority of adult learner programmes are provided by subcontractors, and these courses provide effective progression routes. For example, around half of adult learners studying an employability course secure a job by the time they have completed their programme. Leaders and managers have established robust quality assurance processes for subcontracted provision. They take decisive action when this provision does not meet the high expectations and standards they have for their learners.

Governors are sufficiently experienced to challenge leaders. They take advantage of opportunities to visit teaching sessions and speak with learners to assure themselves of the accuracy of the information that they receive from leaders. Leaders provide well-planned and useful reports to governors. They have worked well with governors to strengthen and formalise their oversight and scrutiny of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that the team responsible for safeguarding is appropriately trained. The safeguarding team use the valuable links that they have with external agencies well to inform the training they provide for other staff. As a result, learners feel safe and know who to contact if they have a safeguarding concern.

Leaders and governors are informed by the safeguarding team of campus-specific safeguarding concerns well. They use this information to make effective staffing decisions. For example, leaders have increased the availability of counselling to learners on all college campuses who have required it.

Leaders make sure that staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty. However, not all staff teach about these concerns well enough. As a result, not all learners and apprentices develop a full enough understanding of the dangers that exist.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the quality of the curriculum, work placements and specialist support for learners with high needs.
- Ensure that young learners attend their English and mathematics lessons and ensure that the actions taken lead to greater achievement in these qualifications.
- Make sure that all learners and apprentices receive coherently planned and well-taught personal development as part of their curriculum, including effective careers guidance for all adult learners and learners with high needs.
- Involve employers more comprehensively in the design and implementation of all curriculums.

Provider details

Unique reference number	132779
Address	Cocklebury Road Chippenham Wiltshire SN15 3QD
Contact number	01985803450
Website	www.wiltshire.ac.uk
Principal and CEO	Iain Hatt
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2015
Main subcontractors	Aspire Learning Curve Group Ltd. Royal Artillery Centre for Personal Development

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, curriculum and quality, 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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