

Bishop Auckland College

General further education college

Inspection dates

13–16 November & 18–19 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors are aware of most of the key weaknesses in their provision. However, they have underestimated the impact of these in the college's self-assessment and have been too slow to address several of the key areas which needed significant improvement.
- Management of the performance of teachers does not lead to sufficient improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teaching staff do not consistently challenge learners on study programmes, particularly the most able, to make the progress of which they are capable.
- The proportion of apprentices successfully completing their programmes has been too low for the last three years. Although current apprentices are making at least expected progress, a significant minority of apprentices remain in learning beyond their planned end date.
- The proportion of learners on study programmes achieving a high-grade pass in GCSE English and mathematics or achieving their functional skills qualifications is too low.

The provider has the following strengths

- Staff promote a culture of tolerance and respect. Learners and apprentices behave well and are respectful towards their peers.
- The principal, senior leaders and governors work well with partners, employers and stakeholders to align the curriculum to meet local needs.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from highly effective pastoral support.
- Adult learners develop their self-confidence, and the proportion who achieve their qualifications is high.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Bishop Auckland College is a medium-sized general further education college with the main campus situated on the edge of the market town of Bishop Auckland. The college serves County Durham and parts of Darlington. As well as offering further education courses in a wide range of subject areas, the college also delivers apprenticeships and higher education programmes.
- The college has a small number of learners in receipt of high-needs funding. From September 2018, the college introduced directly funded 14 to 16 provision, which a small number of learners currently study. Neither of these provision types was graded in this inspection.
- The unemployment rate in the area surrounding Bishop Auckland is higher than the national average. In 2016/17, the proportion of pupils in Bishop Auckland who achieved GCSEs at grade 5 or above in English and mathematics was slightly lower than the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the reliability of self-assessment by ensuring that leaders and managers recognise the significance of the weaknesses that they identify.
- Set and implement clear and precise improvement actions to address weaknesses in provision quickly.
- Further improve the leadership of the apprenticeship provision to ensure that a much larger proportion of apprentices successfully complete their programme within the planned time.
- Ensure that managers carrying out performance management reviews of teaching staff set challenging targets to improve teaching practice and the progress that learners and apprentices make.
- Improve the progress that learners on study programmes make by:
 - ensuring that teachers take account of learners' starting points when planning and delivering learning sessions
 - ensuring that a greater proportion of learners achieve their full potential, especially the most able
 - setting targets for learners that focus on the skills that they need to develop and not solely on the completion of tasks or qualifications
 - identifying quickly when learners fall behind and using appropriate interventions to enable them to catch up rapidly.
- Improve teaching on English and mathematics courses so that the proportion of study programme learners who achieve a high-grade pass in GCSE English and mathematics or achieve functional skills qualifications increases rapidly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders are aware of most of the key weaknesses found during the inspection. However, they have underestimated the impact of some of these weaknesses in their self-assessment, for example the low achievement on apprenticeship programmes. While they have identified actions to address the weaknesses, they have not recognised the urgent need for improvement in several areas and have been too slow to take effective action.
- Although leaders identify English and mathematics as a key strategic priority, the improvements in learners' outcomes have not been rapid enough. Leaders have been unable to improve learners' attendance sufficiently at classes leading to these qualifications. The proportion of learners of all ages achieving a high grade in GCSE mathematics is very low and declining over time. The proportion of learners on study programmes achieving a high grade in GCSE English is too low.
- Leaders have established a clear cycle of quality monitoring and improvement activities. However, staff do not use these activities consistently across all areas of the college to identify and address weaknesses quickly. For example, many course performance reviews do not apply the prescribed criteria for flagging instances of poor attendance as a high risk, despite the guidance to do so. Too often, senior leaders do not check the completion of improvement actions sufficiently. As a result, actions are not taken quickly enough to address weaknesses before they become significant issues.
- Leaders' use of performance management does not challenge teachers, other than the very few who leaders identify as significantly underperforming, to make improvements to their practice and performance. Managers do not identify all teachers who need to improve their teaching and the progress that their learners make. As a result, too few staff improve their teaching practice and too few are held accountable for their learners' progress.
- Leaders and managers provide an effective adult programme that meets the needs of many disadvantaged adults in the local area. They make good use of funding to provide an innovative curriculum that supports learners' ambitions successfully.
- Leaders are ambitious for the college and what it can provide for its learners. They rightly believe that the college offers life-changing opportunities for local learners who are most disadvantaged. The recent expansion of higher education pathways for learners progressing from level 3 programmes means that learners who might not otherwise gain higher-level qualifications are able to do so locally.
- The principal, senior leaders and governors engage particularly well with partners, employers and stakeholders. They use links with partners well to inform their strategic priorities and shape the college's curriculum. For example, leaders recently established an alternative curriculum offer for 14- to 16-year-olds who were not thriving at school in response to local demand. As a result, the curriculum very successfully meets the needs of local people, the communities and the businesses that the college serves.
- Leaders and managers promote a culture of tolerance and respect, which most learners and apprentices respond to well. Leaders set and realise high expectations for staff and

learners to respect the differences of others.

- Leaders and managers have put suitable plans in place to ensure that learners who have additional learning and support needs can participate in education, overcome barriers, become more independent, and achieve their qualifications and learning goals.
- Leaders recognise the risks of working with subcontractors and have made the decision to reduce significantly the proportion of their funding used by subcontractors. Managers closely review the performance of subcontractors through frequent quality reviews. They are winding down the contract with their apprenticeship subcontractor and, at the time of the inspection, did not have any subcontracted provision for adult learners.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are very committed to leaders' vision for the college and its role in the local community. They monitor the college's finances and management of resources closely to ensure that the provision can continue to meet the needs of the businesses and communities it serves.
- Governors receive regular updates about key aspects of the college's performance through detailed reports from leaders and the key performance indicator dashboard. They use this to support leaders and challenge them about the college's performance. However, this has not led to the college sustaining high-quality provision or to leaders making swift improvements where performance is not good enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding. Staff have good links with external agencies to support the promotion of safeguarding and provide specialist support for learners who are experiencing safeguarding issues. The designated safeguarding lead and deputies have appropriate training. Duty managers have appropriate training in safeguarding. They make referrals to the designated lead if incidents occur while they are on duty.
- Managers maintain a detailed and up-to-date single central record. They carry out appropriate checks on all staff regarding their eligibility to work in the UK and undertake enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
- Leaders and managers have taken appropriate action to ensure that arrangements to safeguard learners aged 14 to 16 who attend the college for their education meet statutory requirements and keep them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently challenge learners on study programmes, particularly the most able, to make the progress of which they are capable. They do not individualise learning activities to match the differing needs and abilities of learners. Too often, teachers do not check that learners understand concepts before moving on to the next topic.
- Too often, teachers do not give learners on study programmes the opportunity to think

for themselves. Teachers answer their own questions, share their own views on topics or give too much support to learners when they are working on tasks. As a result, not enough learners work independently to make the progress of which they are capable.

- Too many teachers do not use assessment methods that help learners to produce high-quality work. Not enough teachers give helpful feedback to learners and apprentices so that they know how to improve their work. For example, assessors do not provide the small number of higher-level apprentices with helpful feedback to enable them to develop their understanding of academic conventions sufficiently well.
- Teachers do not take enough account of the skills and experience that learners on study programmes and apprentices already have when they are planning and providing their lessons. Too often, learners on access to higher education programmes are not aware of what they need to do to improve the quality of their written work to prepare themselves better for entry into university. For example, teachers plan and provide learning that focuses solely on what learners need to do to pass their assignments and not what they need to do to develop their skills and knowledge further.
- Teachers and assessors use their vocational knowledge well to help learners and apprentices understand how their learning is relevant to the workplace. Most teachers and assessors make good links between theory and practical concepts. Teachers on community learning programmes help learners to develop a good understanding of the demands of work. As a result, most learners and apprentices understand how their learning will help them in their future careers.
- The vast majority of teachers create a positive and supportive learning environment. Learners feel safe asking questions and accepting verbal feedback. Learners with multiple barriers to learning quickly receive the support they need. Teachers use praise and encouragement well to motivate learners. As a result, those with barriers to learning engage fully in their education and make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers in vocational subjects develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills well and relate these skills to the subject that learners are studying and the tasks that they complete. Most learners and apprentices develop good vocational and technical vocabulary. Adult learners develop numeracy and literacy skills well and understand the importance of these skills in their everyday lives.
- Teachers effectively identify the starting points of adult learners on community learning programmes and of learners who have high needs. They use this information well to set targets and plan learning. Teachers effectively review individual learners' progress from their starting points. As a result, these learners make good progress towards their learning goals.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners and apprentices benefit from highly effective support. Staff ensure that extremely helpful and early support is available to learners and apprentices who face barriers to their learning that, without such support, would affect their ability to study. Support at the college includes a discretionary bursary, pastoral mentors and referrals to external agencies. As a result of the support available, the large majority of learners stay on their courses and achieve their main qualification.

- Learners and apprentices behave very well. They treat their environment, staff and their peers with respect. They are understanding of the views of others and develop good relationships with their teachers and assessors.
- Learners and apprentices develop their confidence and self-esteem very well. Adult learners and those on study programmes use their improved personal skills to prepare for employment or further study. A few apprentices take on additional responsibilities at work and increase their pay.
- A high proportion of learners benefit from work experience. Almost all learners on study programmes take part in external work placements. Staff plan work placements carefully so that they are of high quality and purposeful. Staff provide adult learners with opportunities to take part in external work experience where appropriate. For example, access to nursing learners take part in extended work placements to enhance their university applications. As a result, learners on study programme and adult learners are well prepared for transition into employment or further study.
- Learners develop good employability skills. Teachers of vocational subjects use good-quality facilities and resources well. Staff carefully select subject-specific enrichment activities for learners to ensure that they link well to future employment opportunities. As a result, learners are well prepared for their next steps.
- Learners and apprentices know how to keep themselves safe. They have a very good understanding of personal safety, including digital and online safety, and know how to raise concerns. Most learners and apprentices are aware of the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Community and charitable activities enable learners to develop a greater awareness of the communities in which they live. Learners work well with their peers to raise money for local and national charities. For example, learners on a catering programme provide meals to local nursing home residents. Learners also take part in activities to raise awareness of issues in society, such as creating displays for Remembrance Day.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. Well-trained and experienced staff provide cross-college careers advice. Subject-specific staff ensure that learners fully understand the content of programmes before they enrol. A large proportion of learners progress to a higher level of study during their time at college. However, leaders and managers do not analyse fully how learners' studies influence their future careers.
- Attendance is too low for a small minority of learners on study programmes. Attendance at classes that lead to qualifications in English and mathematics is low for too many learners. Attendance for adult learners is good, particularly in community learning. Apprentices attend work well; however, too many do not attend their off-the-job training well enough. Recently, staff have begun to use a range of new approaches to encourage learners to improve their attendance, such as changing how frequently they make bursary payments and sending text messages when learners miss sessions. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these new initiatives.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Not enough learners on study programmes achieve their full potential. Although the

proportion of learners achieving their main qualification is high, too few learners achieve the grade of which they are capable. Although improving, the proportion of learners achieving a high grade in their vocational subject is too low.

- For the last three years, the proportion of apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeship has been too low and has not improved significantly. Achievement rates are particularly low in health and social care, construction and manufacturing.
- Too few learners on study programmes achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. The proportion of learners achieving a high-grade pass in GCSE English and mathematics is very low. Achievement rates for the small number of learners who take functional skills qualifications are also too low. Too many learners leave their English and mathematics courses without achieving a qualification.
- The proportion of female learners on study programmes and female apprentices achieving qualifications is significantly greater than the proportion of male learners and apprentices. The gap is the reverse for adult learning programmes, with males achieving slightly better than females. A greater proportion of learners who declare a learning need and/or disability achieve their qualification than their peers. The proportion of apprentices aged 24 and over who successfully complete their apprenticeship is significantly lower than that of apprentices aged under 24. Managers are aware of the differences in achievement rates. They have taken action to address the gap in apprenticeships, but they have been unable to prevent other gaps from widening.
- Most adult learners, especially those in community learning, make good progress towards achieving their qualifications and learning goals. As a result, the proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications is high.
- The standard of learners' work meets awarding body and industry expectations. Learners develop valuable skills that will help them in their future careers. Adult learners routinely produce good work. Most employers value the work that apprentices produce.
- A high proportion of adult learners achieve a high grade in GCSE English. The proportion of adult learners who achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics is very high. However, the proportion who achieve a high grade in GCSE mathematics is too low.
- The proportion of learners and apprentices who are in employment, education or training after their studies is high, where leaders have recorded destinations for learners and apprentices. Staff know that most of learners on study programmes continue in education following completion of their study programme. However, managers do not know what too many adult learners and apprentices move on to after their courses have finished. Managers do not routinely analyse the impact of learning on what learners and apprentices do next.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college has approximately 560 learners on study programmes, all of whom follow vocational programmes. Courses range from entry level to level 4. Around a third of learners study at level 1 or below, a further third at level 2, around a quarter at level 3 and a very small number of learners study at level 4. Around half of all qualifications that learners take are in English and mathematics. The largest vocational subject areas are health, public service and care, construction, and commercial and retail.
- Too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly the most able. Teachers do not set learners targets based on their prior attainment. Too often, teachers set targets that focus too much on learners achieving their main qualification and not sufficiently on the development of new skills. Although improving, not enough learners achieve high grades in their qualifications.
- Teachers do not consistently take learners' existing knowledge and skills into account when providing learning. They do not require the most able learners to complete work that is sufficiently challenging. Teachers frequently set tasks that are too easy and give the same tasks and activities to all learners, irrespective of their development needs. As a result, not enough learners make the progress expected of them.
- Teachers do not routinely assess learning in lessons well enough. Too often, they allow the most confident learners to dominate group discussions. Teachers fail to check the learning of the less confident learners well enough. As a result, too many teachers are not clear about who is ready to move onto new learning.
- A minority of teachers do not encourage learners to develop their own ideas. This means that learners do not consistently reflect on key learning and make links between theory and practice. Teachers often provide too much information for learners too quickly. When this happens, learners rely on teachers to help them when they do not know the answer to questions rather than working it out for themselves.
- Teachers create a positive and supportive learning environment. Learners feel comfortable seeking guidance from their teachers. They behave well in class. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to motivate learners.
- Learners produce written work that is appropriate to their level of study. However, too many teachers do not provide feedback that is helpful or timely to enable learners to improve. Teachers do not routinely support learners to achieve higher grades. As a result, not enough learners develop the quality of their work over time.
- Most learners develop vocational skills in line with industry standards. Teachers use their own industry experience well to illustrate key learning points. They use industry-standard facilities and equipment to teach practical lessons. For example, brickwork learners build walls to meet specific tolerance limits and beauty therapy learners provide a wide range of treatments within commercial timescales. As a result, learners are well prepared for employment in commercial settings.
- Almost all learners benefit from well-planned and relevant work experience. They quickly develop their employment-related skills and make positive contributions in the workplaces they attend. Learners evaluate the skills that they develop during placements when they

return to college, and staff support further development of their skills in practical sessions.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The college has approximately 1,600 adult learners, including around 250 on community learning programmes. Adult learners study access to higher education programmes, vocational courses alongside learners on study programmes, and programmes aimed at improving their employment prospects.
- The management of adult learning programmes is good. Managers use funding well to ensure that the curriculum is innovative and supports learners' ambitions. They access grants to provide community projects that involve work with local employers to meet the needs of local unemployed people.
- Teachers work well with learners to set targets that closely match learners' needs and aspirations. Targets often reflect what learners need to develop to progress to their next steps, including the entry criteria for higher education programmes. Where relevant, teachers challenge learners to consider professional conduct when setting their targets. For example, in complimentary therapies teachers set targets so that learners develop their customer service skills. Learners in community learning set targets to improve their confidence.
- Most teachers provide learners with constructive and clear feedback that helps learners deepen their knowledge of the subject. Teachers assess learners' written work well and outline what needs to improve. Most learners respond positively to feedback and, as a result, improve their work over time. However, in a few cases on access to higher education courses, teachers do not provide feedback on written work that is timely enough to help learners improve their skills and knowledge before they receive their next assignment.
- Almost all learners increase their confidence and self-esteem through learning. They benefit from highly effective pastoral support from teachers and college staff to overcome barriers to learning. They develop skills that make them more employable. For example, older learners in community learning develop skills to use computers, many for the first time.
- Managers and staff are responsive to individual learners' needs. Teachers provide effective support when learners are unable to attend. They use high-quality e-learning materials so that learners do not fall behind because of not attending a class. However, for a very small number of learners, attendance is too low.
- A few teachers do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to participate in discussions. Too often teachers on access to higher education courses do not encourage learners to share their opinions on discussion topics and fail to include less confident learners. As a result, these teachers are unable to tell whether learners fully understand topics before setting their assignments.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college has approximately 300 apprentices in learning. Just under half are studying on level 2 apprenticeships, with a similar proportion studying at level 3, and a small

number on higher-level apprenticeships. Just under two thirds of current apprentices are over 19 years old. Most apprentices are on apprenticeship frameworks, with just a few on standards-based programmes. Current programmes meet the requirements of apprenticeships.

- Until recently, too many apprentices did not make the progress expected of them based on their starting points and their length of time on programme. The proportion of apprentices who complete their programme successfully has been too low for the last three years. In-year achievement rates are low in a few vocational areas, including plumbing, manufacturing and transport. A significant minority of apprentices are still in learning beyond their planned end dates.
- Leaders' most recent self-assessment is too positive and does not identify the key weaknesses that need addressing urgently. As a result, leaders and managers have not addressed persistent underperformance quickly enough. Very recently, they have recognised a number of these weaknesses and have identified actions to tackle them. For example, they have begun to monitor more closely the progress that apprentices make.
- Feedback to apprentices does not consistently help them to improve their standard of work. Teachers' verbal feedback in college-based workshops is often too positive. In too many instances, teachers do not clearly identify when practical tasks fall short of expectations. As a result, apprentices' work does not consistently meet the required standards.
- The majority of current apprentices are making at least expected progress towards achieving their apprenticeship. The newly introduced tracking system is effective in helping managers identify how much progress apprentices are making. Managers use this information effectively to target interventions when apprentices fall behind. However, it is too early to see the long-term impact of these actions on apprentices' achievement.
- Teachers structure the theoretical aspects of the apprenticeship programme well. They make learning accessible for most apprentices by deploying effective resources and sequencing activities carefully. Teachers use training activities well to consolidate theoretical learning. This helps most apprentices to develop their knowledge and understanding well.
- Apprentices develop English and mathematics skills well. Teachers have a good understanding of apprentices' areas for improvement. They provide effective support and, where appropriate, link English and mathematics to practical situations so that apprentices understand the importance of these skills in their working lives. As a result, most apprentices complete the English and mathematics requirements of their apprenticeship early in their programmes.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130657
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,187
Principal/CEO	Natalie Davison-Terranova
Telephone number	01388 443000
Website	www.bacoll.ac.uk

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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	193	467	193	691	160	215	15	229
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	60	77	41	101	33	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	41							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	47							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Nova Payroll Services J and K Training Ltd							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of 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. On 18 and 19 December 2018, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors conducted an additional inspection visit under Ofsted's protocol for gathering additional evidence to secure an incomplete inspection.

Inspection team

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