

# Wirral Metropolitan College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

3–6 October 2017

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	Traineeships	Good
		Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have a clear and ambitious plan to become an outstanding college. Changes since the previous inspection have led to significant improvements in students' outcomes.
- The principal and senior leaders work with a range of stakeholders, which has positioned the college strategically as a key player in the economic and social development of the region.
- Leaders, managers and staff successfully create a culture of respect and tolerance; as a result, the behaviour and attitudes of students, apprentices and trainees are very good.
- Education and training for students with high needs is outstanding and they make exceptional progress.
- Students' support needs are identified quickly and highly effective support enables students to make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Trainees make good progress on their programmes and the vast majority progress into employment or apprenticeships; the management of the subcontractor is good.
- The proportion of students who achieved their qualifications on 16 to 19 study programmes improved significantly in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16.
- Students on adult learning programmes are highly motivated and enjoy their learning; most students complete their studies successfully.
- Too many apprentices make slow progress and do not complete their programmes by their planned end date.
- The proportion of younger students and adults who achieve GCSE English and mathematics at grades A\* to C and levels 9 to 4 is too low.
- A minority of students, in particular the most able and those studying level 3 programmes, do not make the progress they are capable of from their starting points.
- A minority of students and apprentices do not have a sufficient understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Wirral Metropolitan College is a general further education college serving the borough of Wirral, the largest borough in Merseyside. The college provides education and training in a wide range of vocational areas for post-16 students. At the time of inspection there were approximately 1,800 students on 16 to 19 study programmes, 2,000 studying adult learning programmes, 760 apprentices and 65 traineeships.
- The borough of Wirral has a population of around 321,000. The borough has some of the poorest wards in the country, which are to the east of the borough compared to more-affluent wards towards the west. The proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 achieving five GCSEs at grades A\* to C or levels 9 to 4 including English and mathematics is above the national rate. In 2016/17 over half of students aged 16 to 18 enrolled at the college were from areas linked to high deprivation.

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

- Rapidly increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their programme by their planned end date by:
  - ensuring that the college has reliable systems for checking apprentices' progress, thus enabling effective action to be taken when apprentices' progress is slow
  - taking into account apprentices' prior knowledge and skills when planning learning and training to enable apprentices to acquire new skills and knowledge at a level of which they are capable
  - setting apprentices clear, detailed targets and ensuring that reviews are thorough and accurate so that apprentices know what progress they have made and what they need to improve further.
- Improve further the English and mathematics skills of students, apprentices and trainees by planning lessons and activities which take into account the levels they have already reached in these subjects to extend their learning.
- Improve the proportion of students who achieve GCSEs in mathematics and English at grades A\* to C and 9 to 4.
- Use the information on students' starting points to plan lessons that enable all students to make the progress of which they are capable, in particular for the most able students and those on 16 to 19 study programmes at level 3.
- Ensure that all students and apprentices have a good understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have a clear vision and aspiration to become an outstanding college. Staff are committed to improving outcomes for students and are enthusiastic about the change in culture since the previous inspection. A greater focus on accountability and the continuous improvement of staff performance has led to significant improvements in the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers focus increasingly on improving teaching and learning to ensure that all students from this economically diverse community have opportunities to learn and progress to employment, further education or apprenticeships. For example, they successfully engage young people in Wirral who are not in education, employment or training in traineeships and the 'progression to further education' programme.
- The principal and her senior team's shrewd and insightful strategic decisions position the college as a key player in the economic and social development of the Wirral. They work tirelessly with a range of external stakeholders including the Liverpool combined authority, Wirral local authority and the Liverpool city region local enterprise partnership to develop very effective relationships. These relationships are vital in identifying future skill demand. As a result, leaders and managers maximise opportunities for the communities and employers that they serve to prosper and increase social mobility.
- Leaders and managers have a comprehensive knowledge of the future skill requirements of employers in Greater Merseyside. They use this labour market intelligence to plan the curriculum carefully to meet these skill requirements. Senior managers refine and adapt the curriculum to provide opportunities for their communities to develop skills for employment. For example, the new science, technology, engineering and mathematics centre at the Twelve Quays campus will be integral to developing the skills needed for the advanced manufacturing sector located at the nearby Wirral Waters.
- Since the previous inspection, senior managers have strengthened the performance management procedures to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the college. They use performance management processes effectively to ensure that staff adhere to the high expectations set by leaders and managers. Around one eighth of teaching staff and managers have left the college as a result of not meeting senior leaders' expectations.
- Leaders and managers have successfully implemented an effective teaching and learning strategy to improve the standard of education and training for students. They now have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning at the college.
- Senior managers prioritise the management of subcontractors. They undertake regular meetings and observations to monitor the quality of provision. Consequently, students who receive education and training from these partners make good progress.
- Staff receive targeted support through carefully well-planned professional development opportunities that contribute to the improvement of students' achievement and experience at the college. However, managers acknowledge that apprentices and the most able level 3 students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve the skills and high grades of which they are capable.

- Leaders and managers have implemented a clear framework to promote equality and celebrate diversity throughout the college. They develop clear priorities for each academic year to ensure that the principles of equality and diversity are met. The equality and diversity scrutiny committee have been successful in ensuring that key priorities are dealt with throughout the year. Consequently, key impact indicators such as reducing the achievement gap between male and female students have been achieved.
- Leaders and managers have developed a tutorial programme that captures the ethos of being a citizen in modern Britain successfully. Staff receive regular training on how to integrate the values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect into vocational areas. Consequently, students are respectful and both they and staff promote the values and behaviours that senior managers and governors expect.
- While the self-assessment report for 2016/17 was accurate, the associated improvement plan does not clearly identify how the actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning will be achieved. Consequently, the governing body and managers at all levels throughout the college do not have an accurate understanding of the progress that is being made on improvement actions set out in the plan.
- Leaders' and managers' English and mathematics strategy is not having sufficient impact. Trainees, students and apprentices do not develop these skills sufficiently to help them gain the qualification levels of which they are capable.
- The operational management of the apprenticeship provision is not good enough. While the college has recently recruited a new manager, and a higher proportion of apprentices complete their programmes in the planned timeframe, this is still too low. Very few managers' actions to promote improvements have led to a demonstrable impact, due to their recent implementation. Managers place a disproportionate focus on the achievement of units as opposed to the development of skills to meet the exacting requirements of employers.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Governors bring to the board a breadth of knowledge and experience that supports the senior leadership team well to achieve their strategic and operational outcomes.
- Governors have a good understanding of the challenges that the college still faces to be an outstanding college. They provide challenge and support in equal measures in the pursuit of improving the standard of education and training at Wirral Metropolitan College. Governors have not requested sufficiently detailed information to enable them to evaluate, challenge and hold senior managers to account for the progress that students make on their programmes. This is particularly the case for apprenticeship provision.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers implement and follow appropriate policies and procedures that are used well by managers and staff alike.
- Senior managers develop very effective relationships with external agencies to safeguard and to provide support swiftly to students at the college. They have particularly effective arrangements to support students who have been in the care of the local authority.

Managers work with a range of agencies and the local authority to put in place very effective support to allow these students to make a seamless transition into college life. Staff provide very helpful advice to the students, and such financial, pastoral and welfare support assists them in making good progress towards their qualifications.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Students, trainees and apprentices make good progress in their lessons. They work enthusiastically and confidently together and develop good technical and practical skills. Students show interest in their lessons and work well with teachers and their peers. Their behaviour in lessons is very good.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge and experience skilfully to develop students' vocational and personal skills. For example, students on painting and decorating courses, in partnership with the local council, develop skills that are needed to renovate buildings of important heritage to the area.
- Managers and staff assess students' additional support needs very effectively to ensure that support is in place for the large majority of students at the start of their course. Teachers work well with learning support assistants, particularly in practical lessons, so that students with additional support needs make good progress and achieve their qualifications at least as well as their peers.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers and managers have significantly improved their checks on students' progress. Students at risk of not completing their studies successfully are identified quickly and monitored carefully. Staff put actions in place to help them catch up. As a result, a higher proportion of students now stay on their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- The majority of teachers assess students' work thoroughly. They provide detailed feedback so that students know what they need to do to improve. However, for a small minority of students, teachers do not check that they act on this guidance. As a result, these students do not improve their work. In a minority of assessed work teachers do not consistently correct spelling and grammatical errors. As a result, too many students do not improve their written English skills well enough.
- The college 'virtual learning campus' enables students to extend their learning outside the classroom. For example, teachers in motor-vehicle studies put mathematical tasks on the virtual mobile application each morning, for students to complete while they are travelling to college. Teachers provide additional course materials and activities to extend learning for the most able students and to support learning for those students struggling with their work. These additional materials enable students to learn when they are unable to attend college.
- Students and apprentices show a good understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the importance of mutual respect and valuing diversity. They understand how these relate to life in modern Britain. For example, students in art and design participate in a 'Modern Britain' project in which they research issues such as eating disorders and domestic violence. They make good use of their knowledge and skills to represent these issues in the form of a sculptured garment.
- In a minority of vocational lessons, teachers do not make good use of the information

about students' starting points well enough to develop learning activities that meet each student's needs. As a result, a minority of students are not sufficiently challenged or do not have enough time to reflect and be confident in their learning.

- In the majority of vocational lessons, teachers do not extend learners' English and mathematical skills adequately. Teachers do not use the information routinely on students' English and mathematical skills to plan lessons. Consequently, students do not make the progress of which they are capable in these subjects.
- Teachers' and assessors' feedback to apprentices is not clear enough. Apprentices do not always know what they need to do to improve their work and progress. Progress reviews for apprentices are not sufficiently accurate or informative to ensure that they are aware of the progress they are making. Apprentices are not well supported by teachers and assessors to develop their English further.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Staff provide good support for students' well-being and welfare. They work with external agencies to provide information on a range of topics such as homelessness, alcohol abuse and sexual health. They offer students free breakfasts and support with travel costs. As a result, students attend more regularly and stay at college.
- The majority of students are punctual to lessons and attend vocational sessions regularly. Students' attendance at mathematics and English sessions is too low. For younger students this has an impact on their ability to develop these skills well enough to pass their qualifications.
- Students enthusiastically participate in a range of activities to develop their personal, social and employability skills. For example, the 'apprentice challenge' requires students to complete a project on various topics. They work as a team to manage the project, produce a video and present their findings. As a result, they improve their team-working, research and presentation skills.
- Students participate in a wide range of visits, trips, competitions and live projects that relate well to their vocational course. For example, business studies students visit the law courts to observe a court in session. Students on public services courses receive guest speakers from the police and army. This helps students make informed choices about their future career plans.
- Students demonstrate very good behaviour in college with each other and staff. They work cooperatively and exhibit the values of respect and tolerance that underpin the culture and values of the college.
- Students benefit from the links that the college has with the local youth activity centre. They are introduced to a range of sport and recreational activities such as boxing, gym, tennis and crafts. Students participate in the wide range of activities offered to them outside of their vocational courses. For example, they attend the robotics club, where they gain an insight into aspects of engineering technology.
- Careers guidance is good. Students wanting to progress to higher education visit university open days and UCAS events to inform them of the options available to them. Students progressing to higher-level courses within the college take part in taster days to support transition. As a result, a higher proportion of students stayed on their courses in

2016/17 compared to 2015/16.

- The college works with a range of high-quality local employers. Students benefit from well-planned work experience and work-related activities linked to their course. They demonstrate a good understanding of the behaviours and attitudes required for the workplace.
- Students and apprentices feel safe. They know how to raise any concerns for their safety or well-being. They know how to keep themselves safe from risks associated with the internet. For example, students talk confidently about the dangers and risks of putting information and images on social media. However, not all students and apprentices have a sufficient understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

### Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have reversed the decline in students' performance on 16 to 19 study programmes. Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have successfully implemented changes that have resulted in stronger performance management and staff development linked to weaknesses in teachers' performance. This has a positive impact on students' outcomes and, consequently, the majority of students now make good progress on their courses.
- The proportion of students on 16 to 19 study programmes who achieved their qualifications in 2016/17, according to college data, improved significantly and is now above that of similar providers. The majority of students make very good progress in developing their practical skills and produce written work of a good standard. However, the most able students, in particular those on level 3 programmes, do not always make the progress of which they are capable from their starting points.
- While qualification achievements for students on study programmes in mathematics and English has improved, students' progress in these important subjects is too slow, particularly in English. The proportion of students achieving GCSE mathematics and English A\* to C and 9 to 4 grades, although improved in 2016/17, is too low and requires improvement.
- Adult students make good progress. Adult students' achievement rates have improved over a three-year period and are high. They make good progress in developing their mathematics and English skills. Students' achievement of functional skills qualifications in mathematics and English has increased and is high. Although more students obtained higher grades in GCSE English and mathematics in 2016/17 than in 2015/16, the proportion of these is still too low.
- The proportion of apprentices who were successful on their programmes in 2016/17 improved across all age groups. However, too many apprentices aged 16 to 18 did not complete by their planned end dates. Improvement has not been consistent in all sector areas. For example, achievement declined in accountancy, agriculture, education, leisure and travel and manufacturing. Managers have not yet implemented rigorous systems to monitor the progress of all apprentices. Consequently, they cannot ensure effective actions to improve the pace of progress for all apprentices.
- The vast majority of students for whom the college receives high-needs funding make exceptional progress. The standard of students' work is very high. They all develop skills

that enable them to progress to further study or gain greater independence.

- Leaders and managers have closed the gap that existed at the previous inspection in the achievement of male and female students. The majority of students are from areas of high deprivation. Leaders and staff recognise this and provide highly effective support to help them achieve their qualifications. Students in receipt of free school meals or who have been in the care of local authority achieve as well as their peers and in some cases slightly better.
- The vast majority of students progress to positive destinations. The majority of students progress to a higher-level programme, apprenticeships or employment.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Currently, there are approximately 1,800 students on vocational 16 to 19 study programmes. Programmes cover a wide range of subjects from entry level to level 3. In 2016/17, qualification achievement rates improved significantly.
- Leaders' and managers' planning and management of study programmes is good. They successfully implement the requirements of 16 to 19 study programme. Leaders and staff have high expectations of students. Since the previous inspection leaders and managers have implemented well-conceived improvement strategies that have resulted in improved attendance, retention and achievement.
- The majority of students make good progress. Teachers use their specialist vocational experience to make learning relevant and interesting. They link theoretical and practical lessons to industrial standards in excellent learning environments. As a result, students develop good technical knowledge and practical skills. For example, students studying motor-vehicle maintenance are able to explain confidently how to diagnose and correct defective steering columns.
- Teachers check the progress of students carefully. When students are at risk of falling behind in their studies, teachers take swift action and put support in place to help them to catch up quickly. Consequently, the vast majority of students now achieve their qualifications and progress to further education, training or employment.
- Students develop excellent skills to prepare them for the workplace. The college has very good links with local employers. As a result, the majority of students benefit from relevant work-related experience and placements that prepare them successfully for employment. For example, travel and tourism students spend two weeks in Malta working alongside industrial professionals. Catering students gain experience by providing external catering services for events at a local racecourse. These experiences help students gain an understanding of working in their chosen vocational subject and producing work to industrial standards.
- Students attend college regularly and are punctual to lessons. However, attendance and punctuality at English and mathematics lessons are not yet high enough. This impedes the development of students' knowledge and skills in these subjects.
- Students' behaviour in college is excellent. Teachers help students to develop skills that prepare them for life in modern Britain. For example, sports-science students create



packages to address clients' poor posture and give careful consideration to their cultural and religious beliefs.

- Students feel safe in college and know how to raise any concerns they have. They demonstrate healthy and safe working practices in lessons.
- Students benefit from good information, advice and guidance. Staff guide students onto appropriate courses that build upon their prior attainment. As a result, more students now stay on their courses. Staff plan careers guidance carefully. As a result, a significant majority of students progress onto higher-level courses, into apprenticeships or gain employment.
- In a minority of lessons teachers do not set sufficiently challenging work for all students. This results in the most able students not making the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case for students studying courses at level 3.
- The number of students achieving GCSE grades 9 to 4 or A\* to C in English and mathematics requires improvement. While achievement in mathematics functional skills has improved and is now good, achievement in English functional skills is too low.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- The college has approximately 2,000 students on adult learning programmes. Most students study part time. Students study courses from pre-entry level to level 5. There are a range of courses, including access to higher education, English and mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and a wide range of vocational subjects. The largest curriculum areas are access to higher education, ESOL and hair and beauty.
- Managers work very effectively with a range of external organisations, including the National Health Service, local hospitals and higher-education institutions, to design and review many of the adult learning courses. They ensure that the adult learning courses are very responsive to local, regional and national priorities. Managers also make sure that the courses meet successfully the needs of students who hope to gain employment or an apprenticeship, go to university or continue studying in further education.
- Teachers are committed to ensuring that students succeed. They have good subject knowledge and they engage students in learning very effectively. Students work enthusiastically, particularly on practical activities.
- Students are highly motivated and their behaviour is very good. They know their education and training will help them immeasurably in their personal and working lives. For example, many students on the ESOL courses want to become proficient in English so they can integrate more successfully with English speakers in their local communities and improve their employment prospects.
- Students enjoy their learning and are keen to make good progress. For instance, students on a two-term hairdressing course who are working towards a level 1 qualification practise pin-curling and setting techniques, and learn how to deal with customers politely and professionally. Students on an access to higher education course in nursing and allied health studies researched enthusiastically and presented convincingly to their peers the dangers of alcohol consumption and substance misuse.
- Managers and teachers check students' progress much more closely than they did at the

last inspection. They take swift action to help students who fall behind to catch up, make progress and achieve. Since the last inspection, students' attendance has improved and is now good. Retention has also improved and is high.

- As a result of their learning, students become more self-confident and self-assured. They increase their knowledge, skills and understanding and become more independent. Many students have a good awareness of the importance of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect for, and tolerance of, those with different faiths and beliefs. Levels of mutual respect among students and staff are very good. Students feel safe, and are safe, in college.
- Teachers have high expectations of students. Through their teaching, they promote equality of opportunity very actively and accept diversity readily. Teachers make sure that there is a good range of learning resources on the virtual learning environment for students to use to consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding. However, students do not always have sufficient access to resources in their classes to facilitate individual learning.
- Adult students' achievement rates have improved over the past three years and are now high. However, although the proportion of learners who obtained higher grades in GCSE English and mathematics in 2016/17 was higher than in 2015/16, it is still too low.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance about job opportunities, degree programmes and follow-on courses. A high proportion of students progress very successfully when they have completed their adult learning course. In 2016/17, a very large majority of students obtained employment, moved into higher education, obtained an apprenticeship or continued to study in further education.
- Although progress has been made since the previous inspection, teachers still do not consider students' individual needs and abilities sufficiently when planning lessons and designing learning activities. Learning is not matched precisely enough to students' individual needs. Consequently, a minority of the most able learners do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable while those who need more time to consolidate their learning do not always have it. Teachers' questioning techniques are not routinely effective in finding out what students have learned and in checking the accuracy of their knowledge and understanding.
- Most students benefit from teachers' helpful comments and written feedback on their work. However, teachers do not give enough attention to improving all students' English knowledge, skills and understanding, especially in access to higher education and vocational courses. Often, students' written work contains uncorrected grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors.

## Apprenticeships

## Requires improvement

- The college offers apprenticeships in a wide range of sectors. Currently there are 760 apprentices. A total of 457 apprentices are on intermediate level, 336 on advanced level and 21 apprentices on higher-level programmes. A small minority of apprentices are studying with subcontractors. Leaders and managers ensure that apprenticeship requirements are fulfilled.
- Leadership and management of the apprenticeship programme requires improvement.

Managers have not yet implemented rigorous systems to check the progress of all apprentices. Leaders do not receive incisive reports to monitor the progress that apprentices make on their course. Consequently, they cannot take swift action to ensure that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

- Too many apprentices do not complete their programmes by the planned end date. College data indicates that in 2016/17, the proportion of apprentices who were successful and completed on time improved significantly. However, the proportion of those aged 16 to 18 who completed on time is too low.
- The new management team recognise many of the weaknesses identified during the inspection. Managers are developing and putting in place new systems and procedures to improve the provision. However, many of the systems and procedures are incomplete and have yet to be fully implemented.
- Teachers and assessors do not identify apprentices' individual needs well enough. They do not always use apprentices' prior vocational and workplace knowledge, skills and experience to plan their learning and skills development. Consequently, apprentices who have worked with their employers for some time do not always develop expertise at the level of which they are capable.
- Assessors visit apprentices frequently. However, they do not review thoroughly enough what apprentices have learned, the skills they have developed and the progress they have made. They do not always set clear action plans to ensure that apprentices know what to do before their next visit. Employers do not routinely contribute to apprentices' learning and to the setting of their developmental targets.
- Assessors place a disproportionate focus on the completion of qualification units as opposed to the development of new skills and knowledge. Consequently, apprentices have insufficient knowledge about their progress and what they need to do to improve further.
- Assessors and teachers do not always provide apprentices with consistently clear feedback on the standard of their work. They pay insufficient attention to their sentence structure or errors in their work. Consequently, apprentices do not always know how to produce work of higher quality or how to improve the standard of their written English.
- The provision meets the career plans of apprentices successfully. Apprentices choose relevant modules that link to the work that they do. As a result, most apprentices are able to make good contributions to their employers' businesses. They become increasingly more self-confident and occupationally competent.
- In practical lessons, teachers and assessors provide good coaching to individual apprentices. They use good demonstrations, for example how to strip the protective shield off a piece of wire, to ensure that apprentices recognise and adopt good industrial practices. Assessors and teachers are successful in ensuring that apprentices have a good understanding of healthy and safe working practices.
- Apprentices who require support to overcome their barriers to learning receive good support from a dedicated team of teachers. However, a minority of employers do not release apprentices to attend lessons regularly and their apprentices' progress is hindered because they do not develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they require.
- Most assessors and teachers use relevant examples to help apprentices to understand

and apply the values that support them to prosper better in their lives and work in modern Britain. For example, they use current affairs topics, such as voting in local elections, to make British values relevant to apprentices' life and work.

## Traineeships

## Good

- There are currently 66 trainees, of which 55 trainees receive their training from a subcontractor. The majority of the subcontractor's trainees work in primary schools, following a teaching-assistant or sports-coaching pathway. The college trainees do not yet have work experience placements. The college works with a wide range of employers, including those in retail, customer service, business administration, ICT, and hospitality and catering, who provide work experience placements.
- Traineeships are carefully planned and managed. Managers work effectively with college staff and the subcontractor's staff to ensure that courses meet the traineeship requirements. They manage the performance of the subcontractor effectively.
- Teachers identify trainees' starting points accurately. They match the skills and knowledge of trainees to the requirements of the job roles. Teachers encourage trainees to identify how they can make improvements to their own knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. For example, trainees preparing for work in education settings identify which skills they need to improve to work in primary schools. These include communicating with children at different stages in their education and keeping children safe.
- Teachers set high expectations for trainees. They help trainees gain a good understanding of their responsibilities. As a result, trainees develop good personal, social and employability skills that prepare them for apprenticeships and employment. For example, trainees are able to describe the consequences if they are persistently late, including loss of pay and employment.
- Managers have a good understanding of the progress trainees make. When trainees do not make the progress that is expected of them, teachers provide additional support and help them to catch up. However, a small minority of the most able trainees make insufficient progress.
- Managers and staff have developed effective links with employers to provide valuable work experience for trainees. Trainees develop relevant knowledge and skills in the workplace that are valued by employers. For example, all trainees placed with a fast food chain gained full-time positions and a trainee in social media progressed to an apprenticeship with a media and marketing company.
- Trainees benefit from good information, advice, guidance and preparation for the workplace. Staff help trainees to develop the skills that are specific to the sector they will work in, such as the skills required when working with children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of trainees progress to apprenticeships or employment.
- Trainees feel safe in their placements. Their behaviour is good and they are very respectful. They know what to do and whom to speak to if they have any concerns or issues.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not encourage trainees to develop their English skills. For example, when trainees do not understand the meaning of a word they are not

encouraged to find out for themselves using the available resources such as dictionaries. The majority of trainees make slow progress in English. Too few trainees achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics.

- In a minority of sessions, teachers do not check trainees' current understanding sufficiently before moving to the next topic. For example, teachers' questioning tends to be superficial. It does not allow trainees to expand on their knowledge and show what they have learned. Consequently, trainees are unable to demonstrate their deeper knowledge.

## Provision for learners with high needs

## Outstanding

- The college currently receives high needs funding for 136 students. The majority of students follow specialist learning programmes. Twenty students on supported internships are placed with local employers. The remainder of the students are enrolled on a wide range of vocational courses.
- Leaders, managers and governors have very high aspirations for students. They use high-needs funding very effectively to provide challenging and highly effective individualised programmes. These build on students' prior attainment and prepare them for future employment and greater independence in their everyday lives. Students make exceptional progress, increasing their independence, self-assurance, self-confidence and readiness for work.
- Managers and staff have designed an excellent range of courses to meet the specific needs of all the students. Students develop employability and independence skills very successfully in a wide variety of realistic settings. These include motor-vehicle workshops, an animal care centre and the college café.
- Assessment of students' starting points is very thorough. Teachers work with school staff, the local authority and therapy specialists to prepare detailed personalised learning and support plans. Teachers set students challenging and realistic targets.
- Managers and staff work closely with local schools, the local authority and other agencies to ensure highly effective transition arrangements that support students in meeting their needs to attend college. Students' attendance is very high and they are punctual to their lessons.
- Staff provide students with support that is highly specialised and tailored to meet their individual needs. As a result, almost all students make exceptional progress in their learning, enjoy their courses and succeed. All students progress to destinations that enable them make further progress. The vast majority progress to courses at a higher level.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to meet students' individual needs. They provide a wide range of specialist resources to support students. For example, in one lesson students used a range of communication aids, tablets, electronic switches, standing frames and adapted kitchen equipment. Students use programming skills, for example to programme electronic audio switches that the whole class use in their activities.
- Teachers provide excellent support to help students develop their English and mathematical skills. They ensure that these skills are integrated into students' learning. Consequently, students develop these skills very effectively in realistic contexts that

enable them to use English and mathematics in conjunction with their vocational subjects.

- All students benefit from work experience or supported internships. They make outstanding progress in improving their personal, social and employability skills further from the wide variety of work placements, including working in the college café and exploring mini-enterprises in the nearby Pyramid Gallery. For example, students working in the college café demonstrate high standards of food hygiene in the kitchen. They are aware of the risks of cross-contamination and the need to use separate preparation surfaces for different food groups.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary. They are respectful and polite. Staff provide students with highly effective strategies to manage their anxiety, including 'time out' and 'quiet time'. As a result, students improve their self-esteem and a belief in themselves. In lessons on British values students demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of mutual respect and life in modern Britain.
- Teachers and staff check students' progress very carefully. Feedback is extremely thorough and detailed. It helps students to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding and to aim higher. For a small minority of students, targets set for personal development are not sufficiently detailed and precise and, as a result, they do not always make the progress they could.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130493
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	7,690
Principal/CEO	Sue Higginson
Telephone number	0151 551 7777
Website	<a href="http://www.wmc.ac.uk">www.wmc.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	407	423	743	753	512	570	17	156
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	150	307	45	291	2	27		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	10		55		65			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	136							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	J M Education Limited Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college.

## Inspection team

Elaine Price, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Cocker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Thomas Fay	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Thompson	Ofsted Inspector
Shahram Safavi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
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