

# Accrington and Rossendale College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

16–19 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Governors, senior leaders and managers have high expectations of learners and staff. They have successfully created a culture of mutual respect and have rectified successfully the vast majority of the weakness identified at the previous inspection.
- Governors provide a good level of scrutiny and challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account for the quality of courses and learners' achievements.
- Senior leaders and managers have been unremitting in their actions to improve the quality of learners' experiences. Consequently, learners' achievement rates have improved and are now good.
- Senior leaders and managers have forged very good links with employers, community groups and voluntary organisations, which are used effectively to align the college's curriculum to local and regional skills needs.
- Learners and apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need for further study or work. Consequently, most progress into further study, higher education or employment.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good as a result of effective improvement strategies.
- Learners and apprentices have a positive attitude to learning. They take pride in their work, are highly motivated and develop confidence and new skills.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications by the planned end date is low.
- A small number of teachers and assessors do not plan and provide learning that ensures learners and apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.
- In a small number of courses, the achievement and attendance rates, and the proportion of learners who achieve high grades require improvement.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Accrington and Rossendale College is located in Accrington, East Lancashire. The college provides a broad range of vocational study programmes. The majority of 16- to 18-year-old learners are enrolled on level 1 and level 2 programmes. The college provides a range of full- and part-time courses for adult learners. The majority of adult learners are enrolled on short courses, with learners studying full time on access to higher education courses or infilling into 16 to 18 study programmes. The college provides apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher levels across a range of occupational areas; the largest vocational area is construction.
- Accrington is located in the Pennine region of Lancashire, with a population of 35,346. The unemployment rate is 5.8% in Hyndburn and 5.2% in Rossendale, compared with 4.1% across the North West region. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is higher than the national average. The proportion of young people in Lancashire with five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4, including English and mathematics, at the end of key stage 4 is 58%, which is higher than the national average. In four of the five college's feeder schools, pupils' achievements are below this figure. In 2016/17, just under a quarter of 16- to 18-year-old learners enrolling at the college had five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4, including English and mathematics.

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

- Leaders and managers should bring about rapid improvements in the quality of apprenticeships so that a greater proportion of apprentices complete by their planned end date by:
  - ensuring that the off-the-job training for apprentices is planned with employers and reviewed regularly, taking into account the knowledge and skills that apprentices already have, so that they make the progress of which they are capable
  - ensuring that managers and assessors check the progress that apprentices make so that any who are at risk of not completing by their planned end date benefit from additional support to get them back on track.
- Teachers and assessors should ensure that they use their assessment of learners' starting points to plan lessons that provide suitably demanding work for the most able and support learners who need additional help.
- Assessors should ensure all apprentices improve their understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Teachers should ensure that they monitor learners' progress against their target grades and challenge the most able learners to achieve high grades.
- Leaders, managers and staff should continue to focus their improvement strategies on underperforming courses. They should continue to increase attendance rates and the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications, including GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics and in functional skills English and mathematics at level 1.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, current senior leaders, managers and governors have been unremitting in their attempts to eliminate the weaknesses that inspectors identified. For example, they have made good progress in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the collection and use of management information and the accuracy of self-assessment reporting. In 2016/17, learners' achievement rates improved, especially for those on study programmes.
- Senior leaders and governors have an ambitious vision for the college. Their prime aspiration is to provide high-quality vocational training that makes a good contribution to local residents' employability prospects and career opportunities. They have high expectations of learners and staff and they have successfully created a culture of mutual respect. The positive relationships between senior leaders, staff and learners make a good contribution to learners' progress.
- Senior leaders and managers have developed very good links with employers, community groups and voluntary organisations. Managers make particularly good use of these partnerships to ensure that learning programmes are closely aligned to local and regional skills needs. They place a high priority on ensuring that learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that enhance their employment opportunities and career prospects.
- Since the college was inspected in 2016, senior leaders and managers have implemented very effective arrangements for identifying learners who are at risk of not achieving. Learners are identified quickly and supported appropriately to remain in training and make good progress. Teachers are now much more accountable for their learners' progress and their achievement of qualifications.
- Senior leaders and managers have improved performance management considerably, including the process for observing and reporting on teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors agreed with college observers' judgements when carrying out joint lesson observations. Heads of division and curriculum managers are involved in post-observation action planning and provide good support to colleagues to help them to improve. Senior leaders implement capability procedures when staff do not improve after they have received support.
- Senior leaders, managers and teachers promote equality very effectively and celebrate diversity readily. They promote positive and welcoming learning environments and high standards of behaviour. Most learners work together very successfully and respect each other's views and opinions and those of their teachers.
- Leaders and managers identify the college's strengths and weaknesses through a rigorous self-assessment process. Managers are fully involved in the termly curriculum performance review panels, where they are held to account for the progress of learners for whom they are responsible. Senior leaders and managers scrutinise information related to areas such as learners' retention, at-risk learners and attendance. Inspectors

agree with senior leaders' and managers' grading of the provision.

- The college is in poor financial health, as it was when it was inspected in 2016. Governors, senior leaders and managers monitor the situation carefully. They implement appropriate actions to maximise income, reduce costs and increase operational efficiency.
- In 2016/17, senior leaders and managers took insufficient action to ensure that all apprentices made rapid progress. Too many apprentices did not complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date. Early indicators in the current year suggest that many more will now complete by their planned end date.
- Senior leaders and managers recognise that too few 16- to 18-year-old learners obtain grades 9 to 4 in GCSE English and mathematics or pass functional skills examinations at level 1. They acknowledge there is a need to improve the leadership and management of English and mathematics.

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

- Senior leaders ensure that governors receive up-to-date and analysed reports, which they use very effectively to check the quality of courses. They challenge and support senior leaders and managers more rigorously. Governors have a good understanding of the subject areas and where improvements are needed.
- Governors are enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that the college provides high-quality education and training. They have a good range of expertise, which they use very effectively in their role.
- Members of the recovery committee meet frequently. They assess the financial challenges facing the college very carefully and the responsiveness of governors, senior leaders and managers in dealing with them.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers make safeguarding a high priority. They take stringent action to ensure that learners are safe, whether in the college or working on employers' premises. Dedicated safeguarding officers liaise very effectively with college staff and external agencies to ensure that learners' concerns and issues are dealt with as quickly as possible. Managers record any safeguarding and safeguarding-related cases rigorously and comprehensively.
- Governors, senior leaders and managers ensure that staff recruitment processes are rigorous. They check the appropriateness of all applicants very thoroughly and ensure that they are suitable for working in the college. Managers ensure that the single central register is detailed and they regularly update it.
- Staff training is very good and staff are regularly updated through face-to-face and online training. Staff have been trained in the 'Prevent' duty and in British values. Learners' and apprentices' knowledge and understanding of British values are good. The large majority of learners have a good knowledge and understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation; however, apprentices have an insufficient understanding.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers, including those who work in subcontracted provision, use effective strategies to meet the needs of most learners. As a result, the majority of learners enjoy their learning and develop subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding that prepare them well for the world of work. Learners are proud of their work and can talk with confidence about what they have learned.
- Teachers provide good support to learners to enable them to achieve their qualifications and learning goals. Teachers identify learners who are at risk of not achieving, and they put interventions into place quickly to get them back on track. Learning mentors and teachers provide good support to learners to enable them to make progress. Adult learners on very short community courses benefit from excellent support that allows them to complete their course and enables the majority to progress to further learning.
- Teachers use assessment of learners' starting points in English to plan effective vocational lessons that support the development of English skills particularly well. Learners are articulate in practical and theory lessons. They engage effectively in peer discussions and use work-related, technical and subject-specific language competently. Teachers assess learners' starting points on short adult courses to signpost learners to their next steps, and this encourages learners to progress and develop skills relevant to their future employment.
- Learners and apprentices develop good practical skills in the majority of lessons. Teachers and assessors use their industrial expertise and experience to motivate and develop learners' practical and employability skills. For example, catering learners and apprentices receive praise from customers who visit the college training restaurant regularly and recognise the skills that learners are developing.
- Teachers use effective strategies to assess learning and understanding; this ensures that the majority of learners make good progress. Since the last inspection, college managers have significantly improved the quality of the assessment strategies that teachers use in the classroom. The majority of teachers make good use of questioning techniques to assess accurately what learners do and do not know. This allows for swift interventions to support learners who do not have the required knowledge and understanding.
- Learners receive very helpful feedback from their teachers. It enables the large majority to achieve their qualifications. Oral feedback in lessons is immediate and constructive. For example, learners on the level 2 plastering course receive clear feedback to help them practise the use of trowel angles to achieve a range of finishes. Where appropriate, written feedback identifies what learners need to do to achieve their qualification.
- A small number of lessons are not planned and executed well enough to meet the needs of individual learners and apprentices. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide suitably demanding work for the most able learners or ensure that they help the least able. A minority of teachers do not routinely allow learners enough thinking time to develop their oral responses or ensure that all learners engage fully with activities. As a result, a minority of learners do not contribute fully to class discussions or activities and fail to develop their understanding further.
- Teachers do not consistently take sufficient account of the needs of learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in classroom settings, both in the college and

on subcontracted courses. As a result, a few learners do not always engage with their learning. Their enthusiasm is low and they do not develop the skills identified in their individual learning plans.

- A minority of assessors do not plan effectively enough to support those apprentices who are at risk of not completing their qualifications by the planned end date.
- Teachers do not challenge a small minority of learners to achieve or exceed their minimum expected grade. The feedback that a minority of teachers provide does not always clearly identify what learners need to do to achieve the highest grades or the best standard of work. Consequently, learners are not clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Learners in GCSE English and mathematics classes do not make sufficient progress to ensure that they improve their grades. Managers worked with teachers to develop and implement new ways of delivering English and mathematics courses to improve learners' skills development and grades. Internal assessments indicate that more learners are making progress and a greater proportion will achieve higher grades this summer.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Staff in college and those in subcontracted courses promote high standards of behaviour and an ethos of mutual respect successfully; as a result, learners' behaviour is excellent. Learners appreciate the supportive and inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and equality. Learners show high levels of respect and tolerance to each other, their teachers and visitors. They appreciate each other's views and opinions.
- Learners develop the technical knowledge, skills and terminology they need for their chosen job or career. They benefit from work-related activities in practical work environments. As a result, they work to challenging commercial standards and meet exacting deadlines. For example, learners in catering cook meals to order and learners in hairdressing style clients' hair to realistic timescales.
- Learners who have special educational needs make very good progress towards achieving their qualification and developing the skills they need for work. A small number of learners develop their independence very successfully through external work experience and, in a very small number of cases, in supported internships.
- Most learners and apprentices develop effective communication skills and the behaviours they need for work. They receive positive feedback from employers on the knowledge and skills they develop. They increase their communication skills when dealing with customers and develop appropriate team-building and problem-solving skills. Apprentices grow in confidence and make good contributions to their employers' businesses.
- Learners and apprentices feel safe in the college and in the workplace. They demonstrate and adhere to healthy and safe working practices in practical lessons, in workshops and in the workplace. Learners and apprentices know who to report any safeguarding issues to if they arise.
- A high proportion of learners make good progress in developing their English skills in vocational lessons. Teachers plan activities that allow them to apply and reinforce the skills they need for work. For example, they develop reading, listening and oracy skills through debating and discussing topical subjects. Learners in practical lessons read and

interpret instructions well. For example, motor vehicle learners follow manufacturers' instructions when working on different cars. In a minority of lessons, learners do not develop the mathematical skills they need for work.

- Most learners benefit from thorough assessments at the start of their programme, including an assessment of their starting points in English and mathematics. Learners who require additional specialist support have their needs assessed during their transition to college so that support is provided quickly.
- Most learners undertake work experience or work-related activities during their course. This helps them gain the skills and knowledge they need for work. Learners take part in a number of projects that develop their understanding of the local community. For example, learners in painting and decorating refurbished the local cricket club, and catering learners made and sold food at the Accrington food festival.
- Staff work very effectively with a wide range of external services to provide effective impartial careers information, advice and guidance at the start of, and during, learners' programmes of study. This helps most learners to make the correct choice of course and has resulted in a high proportion of learners remaining on their course. Most learners and apprentices progress successfully to the next stage of their career.
- Most learners have a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and know where to go to share any concerns. Apprentices have an insufficient awareness of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation or extremism.
- Attendance rates have improved overall and are high for vocational lessons. Attendance is lower in English and mathematics lessons. Learners' low attendance limits their progress in achieving higher grades in GCSE English and mathematics.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Leaders' and managers' actions to increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications have been successful. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has risen considerably since the previous year and is now high for 16- to 18-year-olds, learners who have special educational needs and adults. Managers monitor carefully learners' progress against their individual targets. The proportion of learners who gain a high grade at level 3 has also risen but remains low.
- The proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 who achieved their qualifications in 2016/17 is high. This is the case for most subjects, with very few exceptions. Achievement is particularly high in retail and commercial, arts and media, agriculture, and construction. A large proportion of learners gain their qualifications but they do not always attain the grades they are capable of achieving. This is particularly the case in computing, health and social care, and public services.
- Achievements for adult learners have been sustained at a high level for the last three years. Achievement rates are particularly high in health and social care, education and training, leisure and tourism, retail and commercial, and health and social care. Achievement rates for adults are low on a small number of courses, such as access to higher education, hairdressing and construction. In the current year, the proportion of learners who have stayed on their course remains low in access to higher education and hairdressing.

- The vast majority of learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding achieve their qualifications and develop their confidence and independence successfully. This includes learners on subcontracted courses. Learners make good progress in developing their practical skills and self-confidence.
- Learners and apprentices develop good practical skills in their chosen subjects. They work to high-level industrial standards and they benefit from coaching and support from knowledgeable and well-qualified staff. Most learners progress to further study, higher education or employment. Most apprentices gain permanent employment with their employer when they complete their apprenticeship.
- Managers' actions to narrow achievement gaps between different groups of learners have been largely successful. Learners who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. Males achieve as well as their female counterparts. Young people who are in the care of the local authority and who had very low attainment rates at school make good progress if they remain on their course.
- Although the proportion of learners who achieve a functional skills qualification has improved since the previous inspection, the proportion who achieve at level 1 in both English and mathematics is low. The proportion of learners who improve their GCSE grades in English and mathematics to a grade 9 to 4 is very low.
- While the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications by their planned end date improved slightly last year, it remains low. Apprentices on advanced-level courses achieve better compared with those on intermediate-level courses. Apprentices aged 16 to 23 achieve better than those who are over 24 years old.
- Managers recognise the need to improve apprenticeships. They have put a number of interventions in place which are starting to have a positive impact. For example, the number of apprentices who remain on their course in the current year has increased. Managers now track and monitor apprentices' progress carefully, which means that most apprentices in the current year are making at least the expected progress. Most apprentices develop good technical skills and the knowledge they need for work.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- At the time of inspection, there were 596 learners aged 16 to 18 on a range of vocational study programmes. Nearly half are enrolled on courses at entry level or level 1, a quarter of learners are on courses at level 2, with the remainder on courses at level 3. The largest number of learners study courses in health and social care, and sport.
- Teachers communicate and reinforce their high expectations of what learners can achieve well. The majority of learners on vocational courses make good progress. Teachers make good use of questions to encourage learners to reflect upon their knowledge and challenge their perceptions. This leads to learners developing a deeper understanding of particular topics. For example, teachers challenged childcare learners at level 3 to provide a critical evaluation of how they create a positive, inclusive environment for children in different settings.
- In practical lessons, learners confidently explain why and when they use different specialist techniques to complete tasks. As a result, their understanding deepens and they

produce work that is to a high industry standard. For example, construction learners create a cavity wall to the correct standard and tolerance. Joinery learners draw on their knowledge and can explain how to fit joints in different situations.

- In the majority of vocational lessons, teachers make good use of assessment strategies to evaluate learners' progress accurately. As a result, those who find tasks difficult receive appropriate and timely intervention. For example, teachers question bricklaying learners at level 2 and ask for examples of where and how they have improved their work. Teachers provide public service learners at level 3 with well-timed individual support to enable them to complete a case study, which relates to the impact of government policies on public services.
- Vocational teachers design and implement engaging activities that support the development of learners' literacy skills well. As a result, learners demonstrate good speaking and listening skills in lessons. This is particularly the case in activities in which learners take turns to listen and respond accordingly. In the majority of cases, this prompts learners to ask highly relevant questions to each other. For example, childcare learners discuss the topic of transgender maturely and sensitively.
- The majority of learners on study programmes participate in relevant and valuable external work experience. Managers' effective relationships with a range of employers develop learners' understanding of the workplace and, as a consequence, they are more informed of what their future career will entail. For example, sports students learn how they could become a police cadet through visiting guest speakers.
- Leaders and managers have improved the guidance that learners receive before they start their course. This ensures that they are enrolled on the correct study programme to meet their individual needs and to support their future aspirations. For example, most entry-level learners progress to the next level of study, and this provides the opportunity for them to develop the vocational skills they need for work.
- A small number of learners on level 2 and level 3 courses do not make the expected progress in relation to their starting points. This is particularly the case in computing, sport, health and social care, and game-design courses.
- In a small number of lessons, teachers do not consistently manage planned activities or questioning effectively to involve all learners. Teachers allow a small number of learners to dominate the lesson, which results in others not having the opportunity to contribute and, consequently, the teacher is unable to assess their progress in the lesson.
- In GCSE English lessons, teachers do not plan and provide activities that are sufficiently challenging. The support they provide is not timely enough to ensure that learners develop the skills they need to achieve a higher grade. In too many instances, teachers use basic questions, which do not develop learners' deeper understanding.
- Attendance is low in English and mathematics lessons. Consequently, learners who are absent do not make sufficient progress in developing the skills they need to achieve their qualification or improve their grade.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- At the time of inspection there were 1,575 learners. Of these, more than half are on

community or employability courses, a fifth are on English, mathematics or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, and the remainder are on courses across a range of vocational subjects. A small number of learners are on access to higher education courses.

- Managers' strategies to recruit learners from disadvantaged backgrounds on to community learning programmes have been successful. Learners make good progress in improving their self-confidence, self-esteem and personal effectiveness. They develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need for employment and further learning. For example, learners on short warehousing courses gain an understanding of health and safety and how to pick and pack goods in the workplace. Learners on courses at the community centre gain the confidence to attend the main college site.
- The majority of learners take part fully in learning. They develop a good understanding of the topics covered and the relevance of learning to their work and personal lives. For example, in community provision, learners can explain how a session on communication has helped them to be more effective at work by considering how carefully they listen to other people.
- In the majority of sessions, learners make good progress. They can identify what they have learned since starting the course. They develop the technical skills and knowledge they need to work in their chosen industry.
- On full-time and part-time programmes, teachers provide clear and constructive feedback. As a result, the majority of learners make good progress over time. As a result of the feedback they receive, access to higher education learners develop and improve their writing skills to meet university standards.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to encourage learners to think more deeply and to challenge their perceptions. Learners explore social and ethical issues in a safe environment and develop the skills they need to make a positive contribution in their communities and workplaces.
- Teachers support learners to work together in class. As a result, they enjoy sessions and learn from one another by sharing their experiences. For example, level 1 learners discussed their own experiences of different management styles to understand the merits of each style and which would be most appropriate in different situations.
- Learners make good progress in developing their written and oral communication skills. They understand the importance of these skills and can explain how the development of them makes them more employable or more productive in the workplace. For example, learners who seek work in the care sector become more confident in their speaking and listening and are able to communicate better with clients or succeed at a job interview.
- Teachers encourage mutual respect and tolerance in classes. Consequently, learners talk about the importance of shared values in the workplace and within their local communities. For example, learners can explain that, although they may have different opinions to their work colleagues, they need to work cooperatively with them. They are particularly aware of, and respect, their cultural differences.
- Learners benefit from good initial advice and guidance; consequently, learners make the correct choice of course. Learners are clear about their next steps and the qualifications they need for employment in their chosen sector, and this results in good progression.

- The expectations that teachers set for learners in English and mathematics classes are too low. Teachers do not take into account learners' individual starting points when planning and executing lessons. Too many learners make slow progress in these subjects because all learners complete the same tasks and work at the same pace, irrespective of their starting points. The most able learners complete tasks quickly and then have to wait for more work.
- Teachers' target setting and review processes for learners on ESOL courses are not always effective. Teachers do not review their learners' progress against the areas for improvement identified in their individual learning plans well enough. They do not consistently set targets that make reference to the language skills that learners have already developed. Teachers do not consistently plan classroom activities carefully enough to address learners' skills gaps.
- Too many learners on the part-time access to higher education programme in 2016/17 did not complete their course. Actions to address low retention on these courses have not yet been fully implemented and, in the current year, retention remains low. Managers do not ensure that teachers use tracking systems to monitor learners' progress. Consequently, they do not identify learners who are at risk and put the appropriate support actions into place quickly enough.

## Apprenticeships

## Requires improvement

- There are currently 493 apprentices in learning across a range of frameworks, including construction, health and social care, business administration, teaching and learning, and childcare. The largest proportion of apprentices are on construction frameworks. Around half of the apprentices are on intermediate-level programmes, almost half are at advanced-level, and a small number are following a higher-level apprenticeship.
- The proportion of apprentices who complete their programme successfully by the planned end date remains low in 2016/17. A small proportion of current learners are making slow progress.
- Senior leaders have recognised the need to improve. They have made recent changes in the management of apprenticeships that are beginning to have a positive effect. For example, managers have introduced more robust performance management processes. They have introduced electronic portfolios so they can check apprentices' progress online more efficiently and take appropriate action if they fall behind. In the current year, a greater proportion of apprentices have remained on their apprenticeship programme and make at least the progress expected of them.
- Assessors do not use the results of baseline assessments to plan and provide a learning programme to meet the specific requirements of apprentices and employers. Too often, apprentices' existing skills and experiences are not taken into account when designing a learning programme. A minority of apprentices make slow progress from their starting points and do not achieve by their planned end date.
- The majority of assessors and teachers do not routinely set goals that support apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding beyond the minimum requirements. The most able and experienced apprentices are not challenged sufficiently to reach their full potential.

- Teachers and assessors check health and safety very carefully and reinforce healthy and safe working practices in sessions. Apprentices show a good awareness of safe working practices when in college or with their employers. However, apprentices have little awareness of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation or extremism.
- Leaders and managers ensure that courses meet the principles of apprenticeship frameworks. Managers establish effective and productive relationships with large and small employers across the region. They develop programmes which improve the skills of local residents and provide employees where there are skills shortages.
- Teachers and assessors provide effective support to apprentices. This helps them to understand the theoretical and technical concepts that underpin their practical work. Apprentices become more confident and relate their knowledge, skills and understanding to industry standards. For example, apprentices can plan, cut and install high-quality skirting boards in the workplace.
- A minority of apprentices are encouraged to learn additional skills that contribute to their employer's business. For example, apprentices in business administration at advanced level have developed a new, environmentally friendly system that reduces plastic waste.
- Apprentices make good use of the industry-standard resources in the college to consolidate their learning and fine-tune their practical skills. Teachers and assessors are good role models. Apprentices develop confidence and demonstrate good practical and interpersonal skills; they show respect and tolerance to others.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning and consider they are on the correct programme to meet their career aspirations. They benefit from good initial advice and guidance and receive appropriate advice about their next steps. Of the apprentices who achieved their qualifications in 2016/17, the majority remained in employment and several of these progressed to a higher-level apprenticeship.
- Most teachers and assessors have effective strategies to ensure that apprentices develop the mathematical skills they need for work. For example, plumbing apprentices at advanced level calculate correctly the water flow rate and choose the right size of pipe for a range of different installations.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of British values and they can apply them in their workplace. For example, the importance of treating people with respect, regardless of their background or religious beliefs.

### Provision for learners with high needs

**Good**

- At the time of the inspection, there were 52 learners with special educational needs in receipt of high-needs funding. Of these, 25 study on foundation-level courses at entry level 2, entry level 3 and level 1. There are 17 learners on vocational courses at levels 1 to 3. Seven learners attend subcontracted courses at a local school.
- In vocational lessons, learners develop good practical skills. This supports their long-term goal of gaining employment. For example, learners style hair with hot tongs or complete a French plait. Other learners learn how to measure a room and work out the correct number of rolls of wallpaper needed.
- Teaching and learning activities in practical classes and skills developed through work

experience are very effective. Learners enjoy and value these opportunities. The activities encourage learners' independence, increase their confidence and allow them to acknowledge their value in the workplace. They learn how to travel independently.

- Learning mentors provide good personal support that enables learners to be confident in the college environment. Learners develop the confidence, knowledge, skills and understanding that enable them to thrive in a work environment. They are supported appropriately to complete external work placements.
- Learners develop good functional skills in English and mathematics in specialist lessons and through integrated activities in vocational classes. In functional skills English lessons, learners take part in useful activities such as writing a formal letter in response to a job advertisement. They understand the importance of English skills in getting a job.
- Learners manage their own behaviour successfully and accept responsibility for their actions; they understand the need to attend regularly. Learners engage fully with their peers and other adults; they are tolerant and respectful of each other and the people they meet.
- A small number of learners benefit from newly introduced supported internships. These offer very high-quality placements with good prospects of paid employment at the end of the course. For example, in just a few weeks, learners have developed a deeper understanding of their role as care workers, such as helping residents to feed themselves. Others have developed basic food preparation skills and are confident to speak to customers in a local café.
- Staff provide impartial initial advice and guidance and this enables learners to explore options beyond their current course. Specialist advisers ensure that career action plans are detailed and specific and equip learners to progress to their next steps.
- Senior leaders and managers use high-needs funding effectively to support training and specialist services for learners. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualification has risen. It is now higher than that of their peers who do not have special educational needs.
- Managers plan programmes of accredited learning carefully to support learners' next steps and to give them sufficient opportunities to develop the skills they require for work and life.
- Managers have developed a positive partnership with their subcontractor. Learners benefit from this partnership by being able to access courses at the school which provide an effective stepping stone to further study.
- The large majority of learners who start on entry-level programmes at the college progress to higher-level qualifications. Foundation-level students are prepared fully to move on to vocational courses such as healthcare, motor vehicle, construction and media courses.
- Learners benefit from a suite of well-equipped rooms and learning resources to support their varied learning styles and support needs. The specific requirements of individual learners are well considered, such as the provision of screened-off sections in quiet study areas to reduce visual stimulus and noise. Learners value the counselling service and quiet supervised spaces at lunchtimes. Teachers use Makaton and symbols effectively to support learners' communication.

- Most learners benefit from work experience that helps them to develop basic practical work skills in meaningful work settings. For example, learners in a school café learn how to clean the coffee machine using a counting technique. Managers do not ensure that all learners who would benefit from external work experience do so. Too few learners with high needs had an external work experience placement last year.
- In a small number of theory classes, teachers do not plan and provide activities sufficiently to ensure that learners make the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case for the most able learners. Too often, learners complete work at the same level, regardless of their ability. This limits the progress that the most able learners make.
- Managers do not challenge and update the education, health and care plans to reflect learners' current needs accurately. Annual review reports do not capture learners' progress well enough. This means that not all learners know how well they are doing and how they can improve further their communication, social interaction and independent living skills.

## Provider details

Unique reference number

130734

Type of provider

General further education college

Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,763
Interim principal/CEO	Lynda Mason
Telephone number	01254 389933
Website	<a href="http://www.accross.ac.uk">www.accross.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+
	266	857	149	531	181	177	0	5
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	156	142	53	99	3	40		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	52							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Lancashire Fire and Rescue Tor View							

### 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

Andrea Machell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah McGrath	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Rachael Hennigan	Ofsted Inspector
Tanya Meredith	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Gillett	Ofsted Inspector
Ruth Szolkowska	Ofsted Inspector

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[www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

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