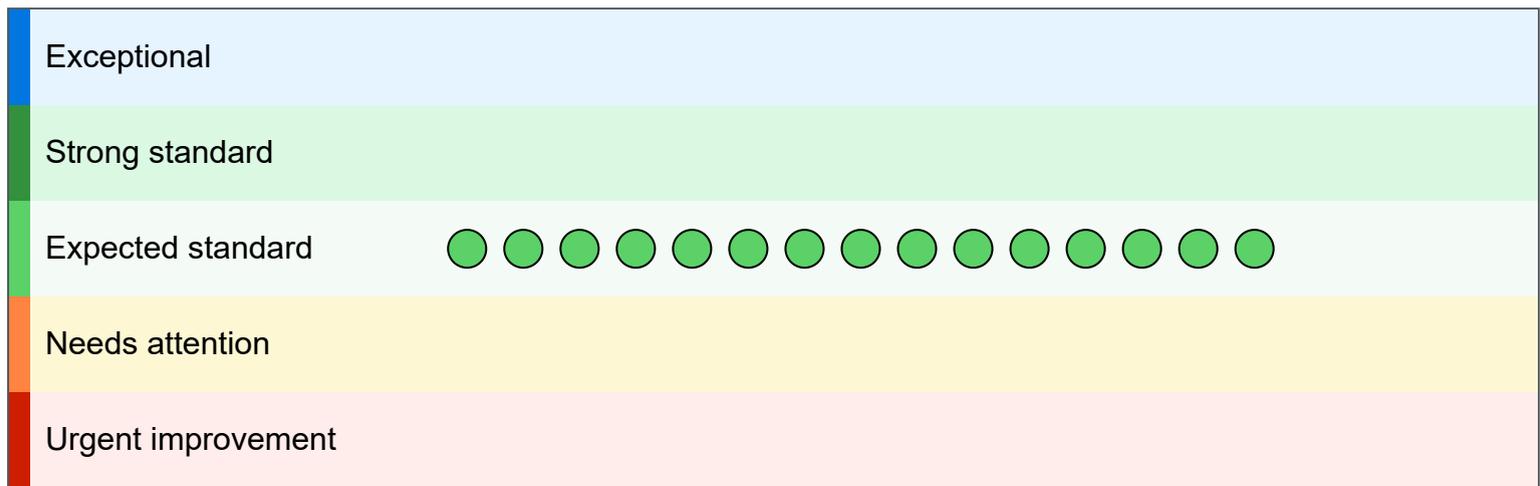


# Gloucestershire College

Address: Llanthony Road, GL2 5JQ

Unique reference number (URN): 130683

## Inspection report: 9 December 2025



### ✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

#### How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

# 1. Inclusion, leadership and governance, and contribution to meeting skills needs

Expected standard



## Expected standard

### Contribution to meeting skills needs

Expected standard 

Leaders engage proactively with employers and other stakeholders including the Gloucester Economic Growth Board, Gloucestershire County Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Department for Work and Pensions, and Business West employer body. Their involvement in multiple skills boards ensures they understand and meet regional priorities, validating their credibility in shaping local, regional and national skills agendas.

Leaders respond effectively to labour market intelligence by investing in provision that is in high demand. The skills-related curriculums meet the skills needs in key sectors such as construction, digital and engineering. The new Cheltenham construction centre and Hub8 workspace directly meet regional demand. These actions demonstrate leaders' responsiveness to evolving skills needs.

Most employers and other stakeholders are systematically involved in curriculum planning, design and delivery. Partnerships with CyNam, North Tower Consulting, and the University of the West of England have resulted in the successful delivery of the level 6 cyber security degree apprenticeship.

Leaders, managers and staff implement ambitious curriculums across most subjects to enable learners and apprentices to acquire in-demand technical skills and knowledge. They widen access to participation in training and promote social mobility for disadvantaged or other vulnerable learners through, for example, supported internships and the Job Smart programme. They support learners and apprentices to secure sustainable careers.

### Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and managers prioritise inclusion and have created a culture in which staff do likewise. They work closely with the local authority to ensure that they understand and respond positively to local needs. They have made care-experienced learners a particular priority and as a result, these learners thrive at the college.

Leaders and managers have made suitable arrangements to identify accurately learners' and apprentices' additional needs, including short-term needs, and quickly provide them with effective support for their studies. Staff work effectively with individuals from external agencies to enhance support for learners beyond the confines of the college.

Teachers and assessors receive suitable training and guidance that enables them to plan and review support for learners and apprentices effectively. Typically, staff work to reduce the support provided so that learners and apprentices become more independent over time.

Staff make sure that learners can access all elements of their programmes. For example, learners who are too anxious to take part in work experience are supported to develop their confidence through supported, internal work placements.

Leaders use suitable systems to monitor the progress of learners and apprentices, including those who are disadvantaged but they do not yet analyse all this data consistently to improve services.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of their provision. They use effective performance monitoring to evaluate the quality of provision. Leaders also monitor subcontracted provision closely to ensure it meets the same intended curriculum standards as provision delivered directly. Where improvement areas are identified, leaders act promptly to refine approaches and sustain effective training across their programmes.

Governors provide appropriate support and challenge. They are committed to the college's vision and strategic direction and ensure leaders deploy resources effectively. They receive clear, well-structured reports from senior leaders including on safeguarding, curriculum developments, organisational priorities and subcontracted provision, which enables them to scrutinise leaders' decisions securely. Governors strengthen their capacity to hold leaders to account through their links to curriculum areas, regular training and ongoing dialogue with leaders, and are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing.

Leaders and governors take decisions in the best interests of learners, particularly those who are disadvantaged or face barriers to learning. Leaders have retained socially important programmes and sustained provision at the Forest site so that disadvantaged and geographically isolated learners can access high-quality education locally. They have grown the curriculum in areas such as cyber, construction and hospitality to widen opportunities for learners with different starting points.

Leaders promote a positive professional culture. They monitor workload, streamline processes and provide appropriate tools to reduce unnecessary burden. Professional learning for staff is well planned and responsive, using coaching, mentoring and leadership development to build staff expertise and sustain improvement.

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## 2. Education programmes for young people

Expected standard



## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Learners typically make swift progress in their chosen subjects and develop useful knowledge and skills which prepare them well for their next steps. Learners build on their employability and interpersonal skills well because of the quality of the teaching they receive and their work experience placements. They develop up-to-date subject knowledge that helps them to prepare for the workplace and identify what they will do next. Learners' work meets and sometimes exceeds the expected standard. Most learners achieve their vocational goals and qualifications and move onto positive next steps as they had planned.

A large majority of learners join the college with low previous attainment in English and mathematics. Learners broadly continue to develop these skills incrementally over time. Although the proportion of learners who achieve grade 4 or above in GCSEs is low, most do make progress improving by at least one grade from their starting points.

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a range of technically and vocationally relevant programmes to provide ambitious study opportunities for young people in the area, and which meet the requirements of study programmes. They adapt programmes effectively using their understanding of the quality of the provision, the progress that learners make and the destinations of previous learners.

Leaders are adept at identifying the needs of learners to make sure that they have access to the right curriculum for their current needs or ambitions. They use effective teaching strategies to make sure that learners, including those who experience barriers to study or need extra help, thrive in their chosen subjects. For example, leaders created programmes for those who have not previously been in education to try vocational subjects, supporting them to find the right subject for their skills and interests.

Teachers mostly use their teaching expertise well to make lessons interesting and bring their subject to life. Teachers on the early years T level expertly blend learners' experiences from their placements into theoretical teaching so that learners can contextualise the theories taught. On cookery courses, teachers seamlessly integrate opportunities for learners to practise and apply their skills throughout the course with regular restaurant service sessions.

Tutors typically use a range of effective strategies that help learners develop new knowledge and skills over time. They use clear explanations, backed up by demonstrations, presentations and visual aids. Teachers use a variety of effective assessment strategies to make sure that learners can apply their learning and to plan for onward training.

Young learners benefit from relevant work-related learning opportunities. Many learners complete beneficial external work experience and some take part in community volunteering. Staff carefully consider the skills that are most important for learners to develop. In catering, staff work closely with employers to ensure that the skills learners develop match those needed in the sector, such as working at pace and having a positive attitude.

Learners behave well, are respectful and have positive attitudes to their studies. Learners attend their vocational and technical sessions well. However, attendance at GCSE English and mathematics sessions is typically lower.

Staff provide the advice and guidance that learners need when considering their careers and planning for their next steps. Most learners are knowledgeable about possible progression or career routes and the different job roles they can do in the future.

Staff provide learners with well-planned support that helps them to thrive at college. Staff teach learners about a range of topics to keep them safe and healthy, including providing resources and signposting for support with poor mental health, and recognising and understanding healthy relationships. Learners know what to do if they are worried about their personal safety or risks such as extremism and knife crime.

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### 3. Adult learning programmes

Expected standard



#### **Expected standard**

#### **Achievement**

**Expected standard** 

The majority of learners, including those who have barriers to learning, complete their programme and achieve their qualifications. A high proportion of access to higher education learners achieve merit and distinction grades.

Learners develop secure new knowledge and skills. For example, learners on Job Smart courses gain secure digital and employability skills. Those on access to higher education (HE) courses improve their subject knowledge, such as biology and logarithmic equations.

Learners produce work that meets the expected standard. For example, learners on the teaching assistant programme provide well-written responses to questions on topics such as safeguarding. Learners studying English for speakers of other languages improve the accuracy of their writing and gain confidence in pronunciation.

Most learners progress to their chosen destinations, including a high proportion of access to HE learners who go on to university. A high proportion of Job Smart learners secure employment. Many learners on the Skills Bootcamp in construction leadership gain promotions.

## **Curriculum and teaching**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of their adult learning curriculum. They work closely with local stakeholders to ensure the curriculum reflects local priorities. Leaders respond quickly to changing needs and adapt their curriculum to meet demand.

Teachers carefully plan the curriculum to meet learners' needs and intended outcomes, including for those who are disadvantaged. Programmes such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) equip learners with essential skills for living and working in modern Britain. Learners strengthen their employability and digital skills through a series of structured short 'Job smart' courses designed for those returning to work.

Teaching is mostly effective. Teachers are experienced and qualified and use their experience to plan engaging activities. In ESOL, teachers use real-life scenarios to reinforce language learning, while Job Smart teachers incorporate interesting tasks using digital tools and artificial intelligence. However, in a few cases teachers allocate insufficient time for learners to practise tasks or do not break activities down into manageable steps.

Teachers use clear explanations and appropriate technical language to introduce new topics effectively. For example, when teaching the present perfect tense, they use a range of pictures to prompt learners to explain whether they have completed certain activities, or would like to do them in the future. Teachers generally provide clear, constructive feedback to help learners improve their work. They also set suitably challenging targets in individual learning plans, linked to each learner's areas for development.

## **Participation and development**

**Expected standard** 

The learning environments for adult learners are inclusive, friendly and supportive. Learners do not experience bullying, harassment, discrimination or unacceptable behaviour in the college. Learners have access to a wide range of suitable resources and training to help them understand topics such as mental and physical health. Most adult learners have a good understanding of fundamental British values and risks associated with radicalisation and extremist views.

Learners are motivated to attend their lessons. They understand the college rules on attendance and the importance of communicating any absence. Attendance rates are high.

Learners develop confidence and resilience during their time at college. Many overcome significant barriers to learning, including attending education for the first time in this country or returning to education after long breaks. Leaders are well aware of the wider developmental needs of learners and provide a supportive environment that helps learners build essential skills, adapt to new challenges, and progress toward their personal and professional goals.

On Job Smart and English for speakers of other languages courses, leaders ensure that learners have access to information about progression opportunities, including further courses, employment options, and practical support for job applications. In a few cases, learners are not aware of the wide range of progression opportunities available to them.

## 4. Apprenticeships

Expected standard



### Expected standard ●

#### Achievement

Expected standard ●

Most apprentices make appropriate progress from their starting points and typically achieve their qualifications within the planned timeframe. Most apprentices, including those who need extra help or are from disadvantaged backgrounds, achieve well and overall achievement and retention are improving over time. In larger curriculum areas, such as construction, achievement is in line with national achievement rates. However, achievement is not yet consistently high across all subjects.

Apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours needed for their roles. They produce work that meets the expected standard for their stage of training and apply their learning effectively in the workplace. Assessors and teachers work closely with employers to review progress and set clear targets. Apprentices are usually ready for their next steps, with most gaining sustained employment or progressing within their current roles. Apprentices also develop their English, mathematics and digital skills sufficiently to support their learning and employment.

#### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders have developed a well-considered apprenticeship offer that meets the priorities in areas including construction, engineering and digital skills and prepares apprentices well for their next steps. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of the training and take appropriate action to secure improvement. Leaders work effectively with employers to plan on- and off-the-job training, enabling apprentices to practise and confidently apply what they learn at work.

Assessors and teachers have strong subject expertise. They typically plan and structure curriculums well, ensuring apprentices develop their knowledge and skills incrementally. Teaching is purposeful and well matched to the requirements of apprentices' roles. In teaching assistant apprenticeships, staff develop effectively apprentices' understanding of phonics, strategies to use with pupils who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities, and behaviour management. In construction, teachers ensure apprentices develop practical competence through well-structured opportunities to practise and repeat tasks, including increasingly complex activities such as fitting doors and staircases.

Staff typically use assessment well to check apprentices' understanding and close gaps in knowledge and skills. However, at times in construction and cyber security, staff do not check apprentices' understanding before moving on. Feedback is clear and developmental, enabling apprentices to improve the quality of their work. Progress reviews are frequent and involve employers, ensuring targets are meaningful.

The curriculum is accessible for apprentices with barriers to learning because staff adapt teaching appropriately. Apprentices develop their English, mathematics and digital skills well through vocationally relevant activities, including frequent professional discussions, reflective writing, the routine use of mathematical analysis and digital devices and tools.

## Participation and development

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that apprentices participate well in their learning and work in positive and respectful environments. Staff place a strong emphasis on health, safety and wellbeing. In carpentry and joinery, teachers closely supervise apprentices working in potentially hazardous workshops and ensure that they follow instructions and use personal protective equipment correctly. In cyber, leaders ensure that learning environments are suitable and support apprentices' physical wellbeing through appropriate workspaces and equipment.

Leaders set clear expectations for attendance, behaviour and professional conduct, which apprentices typically meet. Attendance is high across programmes, including for those attending on block release. Apprentices behave respectfully towards staff and peers, and leaders act promptly and effectively should any inappropriate behaviour arise. Apprentices feel safe. They know how to raise concerns and are confident that staff would respond appropriately.

Staff support apprentices well to develop understanding of wider topics, including safeguarding, fundamental British values, mental and physical health, healthy relationships and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices understand well how to keep themselves safe and demonstrate positive behaviours in work and at college.

Leaders provide apprentices access to relevant careers guidance that helps them prepare for their next steps. However, a small minority of apprentices lack an understanding of wider opportunities for progression and employment.

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## 5. Provision for learners with high needs

Expected standard



## Expected standard

### Achievement

### Expected standard

Learners mostly achieve their education, health and care plan targets and in many cases exceed them. Learners who make rapid progress quickly move on to more challenging courses, such as supported internships.

Learners can explain the secure new knowledge and skills they learn and why these will help them as they progress. These include the 'bus stop' technique for long division and understanding the difference between credit and debit cards and the risks associated with credit cards. Learners on supported internships develop positive workplace behaviours and occupational knowledge and skills to perform their roles effectively.

Learners develop their English and mathematics skills well. These skills are reinforced in their work experience and community learning. However, in a small minority of cases, learners on supported internships are not clear about how to apply these skills.

The majority of learners are ready for their next steps. They routinely progress into community provision, volunteering or employment either directly or through supported internships.

### Curriculum and teaching

### Expected standard

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum for learners with high needs. Since the previous inspection, they have redesigned and further personalised the curriculum, placing greater emphasis on individual learners' progression to work and independence. Leaders work closely with the local authority to improve continuously the services learners receive to support their transition to college, reduce the number who are not in education, employment or training and tackle school avoidance.

Teachers mostly have significant experience of working with learners with high needs. Where staff are new to teaching or have progressed from other teaching roles, such as the primary sector, they are supported well with targeted training to help them adapt their teaching strategies to teach learners with high needs effectively.

Teachers plan lessons well. They mostly use appropriate teaching strategies to help learners understand what they are learning. These include modelling, side-by-side support, and the availability of additional activities to help learners extend their learning and progress quickly towards independence and adulthood. Staff work closely with supported internship employers to schedule and build learners' workplace knowledge and skills over time.

Leaders and staff generally use education, health and care plans and baselining activities effectively to develop a curriculum that reflects learners' needs. They mostly set targets for learners on supported internships that are understandable and closely linked to workplace outcomes. However, for a small minority of learners, targets lack detail, making it more challenging for staff to track learner progress.

Leaders support learners to play an active role in their local communities, such as raising money for the local animal rescue. Learners develop their independence and social skills, which they apply throughout their lives.

Teachers embed careers advice and guidance effectively within the curriculum. They ensure that learners are well matched to their work placements and internships. They brief employers well on learners' support needs, enabling them to make appropriate workplace adaptations that help learners apply their new skills and build confidence.

Learners generally understand topics such as fundamental British values and the risks of radicalisation. Learners demonstrate positive behaviours consistently well. Learners demonstrate empathy and awareness when, for example, dealing with customers and clients who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or are elderly and frail. A few learners cannot recall information they have been taught to help them keep safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Attendance is typically good. Where learners' attendance is lower this is usually due to mental and physical health issues of learners in specialist provision. Teachers are acutely aware of where learners are when they are absent and put strategies in place to support them in re-engaging in learning.

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## What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider

Learners and apprentices enjoy their time at Gloucestershire College. They value highly the extensive support that staff provide, and the welcoming, respectful and friendly culture staff create.

Young learners grow in confidence as they apply their new knowledge and skills to their studies. They become increasingly independent, supported by engaging lessons and practical experiences that make learning meaningful. For example, those studying English for speakers of other languages improve their written skills, broaden their vocabulary and gradually develop the ability to hold longer, more fluent conversations. This progress helps them feel prepared for further education or employment. Young learners particularly enjoy learning in professional classrooms and workshops that replicate the workplace. This helps learners to familiarise themselves effectively with industry-standard equipment and techniques and prepares them well for further study or employment when they finish their courses. For example, learners enjoy developing their practical cookery skills in commercial standard kitchens, and T-level early years learners value their classroom set up as a nursery to familiarise them with the equipment and techniques used to work with young children and babies.

Adult learners typically fulfil their specific goals, such as gaining qualifications to access university or restart their careers. Many overcome significant barriers to learning, including attending education for the first time in this country or returning after long breaks. At the college, they build confidence in their abilities through tailored support and high-quality teaching. Many succeed in achieving the qualifications they need, opening doors to new opportunities. The welcoming and respectful environment encourages adults to rediscover their potential and take positive steps toward their future.

Apprentices, including those in subcontracted provision, typically develop substantial new theoretical knowledge and practical skills that enable them to excel in their roles. Staff work closely with apprentices to ensure they understand the expectations of their industry and can apply what they learn directly in the workplace. For example, teaching assistant apprentices improve their confidence when managing classroom behaviours, improve communication when talking with children with different needs and develop their ability to support children independently. When challenges arise, specialist support is provided swiftly, helping apprentices overcome barriers and make valuable contributions to their employers. This practical, career-focused approach ensures apprentices leave with confidence and competence.

Learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well at the college. Staff provide tailored assistance so learners can participate fully in their courses and make good progress. Dedicated programmes provide opportunities for learners to develop independence and social skills. Learners with high needs also enjoy activities such as football, gym sessions, and boccia competitions, which build confidence, teamwork, and healthy habits.

Learners and apprentices study curriculums that deepen their understanding of life in modern Britain. Staff teach learners and apprentices about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism early in their courses and mostly revisit this later in the course to maintain

learners' understanding. Learners and apprentices model British values well. They are respectful of staff and each other and typically conduct themselves well in their lessons, in the workplace and around the campus.

Leaders work hard to remove barriers for disadvantaged learners, including those facing financial challenges or other difficulties. Staff provide practical assistance, such as bursaries to cover transport costs for travel to college and placements, enabling learners to attend regularly and focus on their studies. This commitment ensures that all learners, regardless of their circumstances, can access education and thrive.

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## **Next steps**

- Leaders should use the data they have on learners and apprentices who need extra help, and the impact of the support they receive, to identify where to make improvements so that services provided are of consistently high quality across programmes.
  - Leaders should implement further training for teachers to ensure they continue to improve their skills, to achieve consistently high-quality teaching across all types of provision.
  - Leaders should ensure that the careers guidance offer is of the same high quality for apprentices and adult learners on all programmes to provide them with thorough knowledge of their progression and employment options.
  - Leaders should put in place strategies to revisit and reinforce the teaching of subjects such as British values and radicalisation, to further secure the understanding of these topics, for all learners.
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## About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, governors, leaders, managers, teachers, staff, employers, learners, apprentices, parents and other key stakeholders during the inspection.

Information about this provider:

Gloucestershire College is a general further education college with 3 main campuses in Gloucester, Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean. At the time of the inspection, approximately 2,500 learners aged 16 to 18 years, 2,020 adult learners, 1,500 apprentices and 525 learners in receipt of high-needs funding were studying at the college. Two thirds of the provision is based in Gloucester.

The college has a broad offer, encompassing a range of academic, vocational and higher education courses, and apprenticeships, from entry level to level 6. This includes study programmes (including T levels) for learners aged 16 to 18 years, Skills Bootcamps for adults, higher national diplomas, foundation degrees and degree apprenticeships. The focus of the provision is predominantly practical, professional, technical education and training. The college operates nationally, in devolved regions such as Manchester, London and throughout the West of England Combined Authority, providing courses for the unemployed or those in prison. The college takes the lead on the county's Syrian refugee settlement programme, which has also been extended to include students from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

At the time of inspection, the college worked with 2 subcontractors, both of which provide higher-level programmes, degree apprenticeships in cyber and engineering, and a level 5 higher apprenticeship in air traffic control.

Principal : Matthew Burgess

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Sharon Dowling, His Majesty's Inspector

Ramin Narimani, His Majesty's Inspector

**Facts and figures used on inspection**

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 9 December 2025

# Number of learners

Total learners

**6,545**

Education programmes for young people

**2,500**

Adult learning programmes

**2,020**

Apprenticeships

**1,500**

Provision for learners with high needs

**525**

# Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

## Education programmes for young people

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	80	83	Close to average
2022/23	79	81	Close to average
2021/22	79	81	Close to average

## Adult learning programmes

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	86	87	Close to average
2022/23	85	87	Close to average
2021/22	89	86	Close to average

## Apprenticeships overall achievement rate

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	60	61	Close to average
2022/23	65	55	Close to average
2021/22	64	53	Close to average

## Apprenticeships pass rate

Year	This provider	National average
2023/24	95	98
2022/23	92	97
2021/22	93	98

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## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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**The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)** inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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