

Walsall Adult and Community College

Local authority

Inspection dates

17–20 October 2016

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		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Outstanding

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Recently appointed leaders and managers have improved the proportion of learners staying on their programmes during the current year; they have reversed the decline in qualification achievement rates, ensuring that these have reached the previously high levels of two years ago.
- Senior leaders successfully target provision at the large numbers of adult learners in Walsall with low prior attainment; as a result, most learners are learning at level 1 or below.
- Governors played a very significant role in encouraging, supporting and challenging the middle managers during the period where senior leadership capacity was limited due to sickness and resignations; they have a good oversight of the quality of the provision.
- Programmes meet the requirements of the learners, employers and local enterprise partnerships (LEPs); programmes are designed sensitively to encourage maximum participation from learners who may find attending large institutions daunting.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; highly ambitious tutors enthuse learners to learn and develop their skills to gain qualifications, improve skills and employment prospects.
- Support for learners is good; this includes initial information, advice and guidance and ongoing support to ensure that learners stay on the programme and make good progress.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective; learners' understanding of British values is sound and they know how to keep themselves safe from risk, including those concerned with of extremism and radicalisation.
- Apprenticeship provision requires improvement; leaders and managers are tackling the key issues, but it is too soon to see the impact of the measures taken in a consistently good learning experience for apprentices.
- Most learners develop confidence and enthusiasm for learning and progress well to their next steps in learning.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills.
- Learners value English and mathematics skills highly and they use these well to improve their future employment prospects.
- Learners enjoy the friendliness and 'family' feel of the college; learners enjoy learning in a harmonious learning environment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Walsall is the 33rd most deprived borough out of 326 boroughs in the indices of multiple deprivation in England. Unemployment levels, at 28% of adults, are higher than the national average. The performance of school pupils at the end key stage 4 is low. Provisional data for 2016 shows only 51% of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including mathematics and English. Walsall ranks 11th of the 14 local authorities in the West Midlands by this measure. Available data indicates widespread low levels of literacy and numeracy in the adult population. Minority ethnic groups make up 23% of the total population.
- Walsall Adult and Community College (WACC) is a trading arm of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC). Learning takes place in over 50 venues, including two hubs based in Leamore and Caldmore, the areas of highest deprivation. Most of the provision consists of non-accredited and accredited adult learning programmes. Apprenticeships and study programmes make up 2% and 6% respectively of the total provision.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Fully ensure that:
 - all staff have accurate data on individual learners so that they can monitor the progress of learners and set precise targets to raise achievement levels
 - leaders and managers monitor the progression and destinations of all learners to demonstrate the true and measurable impact of learning on the lives of learners
 - leaders, managers and governors narrow the achievement gaps identified so that all groups of learners achieve equally well
 - Leaders, managers and governors increase the proportion of male learners in learning
 - Leaders, managers and governors are able to evaluate achievement and progress by provision type as well as by subject area, in order to inform consistently good provision across the range of the college's work.
- Ensure that all tutors set specific and measurable targets for learners based on learners' prior attainment, interests, barriers to learning and aspirations to ensure that all make progress according to their potential by:
 - involving learners fully in the target-setting process, so that they value their individual learning plan as part of their learning and progress rather than consider it as an administrative chore
 - sharing existing good practice among tutors, to provide consistently good learning experiences to all learners.
- Rapidly implement the planned changes for the improvement of apprenticeship provision to good levels by:
 - providing high-quality relevant theory teaching that links closely to the practical training
 - sharing the good practice from within the college to improve tutors' skills and

confidence in delivering functional skills, enabling learners to develop their functional skills alongside their main qualifications

- setting precise and challenging targets for the apprentices so that they achieve their qualifications in the planned period
 - challenging the most able apprentices appropriately so that they may achieve according to their potential.
- Improve more rapidly teachers' skills in teaching, learning and assessment to consistently good levels by observing their lessons on a more frequent and regular basis and giving them very precise feedback on how to improve their impact on learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The college's leaders, managers and governors have managed substantial organisational change well over the past 18 months, caused by the loss of senior leaders due to illness, resignation and job moves. By the end of 2015/16, the newly appointed senior leadership had successfully reversed the dip in the quality of provision and learners' achievement of qualifications. Leaders and governors are effectively planning and managing the re-established working relationships with Walsall MBC.
- Learners play a substantial role in setting the mission and vision of the college as well as in the design of courses and quality improvement. Leaders and managers work very closely with learners to meet the needs of very specific groups of learners in Walsall. The college priorities reflect very closely those of Walsall MBC and the LEP.
- Leaders and managers have carefully designed programmes to provide structured learning and progression opportunities, and these improve the life chances and employment opportunities chances for learners. Learners recognise and benefit from opportunities for learning and training ranging from non-accredited introductory courses through to level 1 qualifications. To provide stronger career pathways and planned progression, in recent months the managers have converted a significant number of non-accredited courses to accredited courses.
- Leaders and managers have sustained productive partnerships with a wide range of Walsall employers and local agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and voluntary sector groups. As a result, agencies refer a greater number of learners to the college, and opportunities for employment and work experience for learners have improved
- Leaders and managers have productive working relationships and partnerships with WACC's current five subcontractors. Leaders and managers hold subcontractors to account effectively and in a supportive way. The partners value the support for their staff because it improves their skills so that they provide high-quality learning.
- Managers recognise that they have not been effective in the management and supervision of the very small subcontracted apprenticeship provision. As a result, learners' experience of, and attainment in, the various programmes offered has been poor. Leaders and managers have taken appropriate actions to review and restructure the arrangements with the apprenticeship subcontractor, resulting in the termination of contracts with all but one subcontractor. To build the capacity within the college to deliver programmes, senior managers have appointed a new team manager and assessors who have begun to improve links with employers and provide effective and timely support to learners.
- Teaching staff benefit from a range of very good opportunities for their professional development. Training is tailored both to wider college requirements and to the professional training needs of individual staff members. This leads to improvements in aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The self-assessment process is highly inclusive and is an insightful and largely accurate evaluation of the quality of the provision.
- Managers collate and analyse a reasonable range of management information and data, which enables them to manage aspects of programmes such as retention and

achievement. Managers have a good overview of the provision by subject area, but this is less secure by provision type, providing a skewed and partial view of success. As a result, the quality improvement action plan does not focus sharply enough on the required improvements.

- The annual observation of teaching and learning process is thorough and well structured, enabling managers to identify what is working well and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment. However, managers recognise that they need to conduct more frequent lesson observations to enable and recognise more rapid improvement in tutors' professional practice.
- Leaders and managers recognise that certain aspects of the action plan are work in progress and have yet to have full impact. For example, college leaders identify inconsistency in the management of individual staff performance and a need for full implementation of new management information and reporting systems. Measures to improve apprenticeship provision have not yet resulted in elements of the provision being fully in place for all learners to an appropriate standard.
- Leaders and managers acknowledge that their efforts towards narrowing the achievement gap between white British learners and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds have not been effective, due mainly to very low numbers of enrolments and learners spread across many subject areas. The new data system is far more flexible, to provide a more accurate account of performance of different groups.
- Male learners are currently substantially under-represented at the college. The proportion of female learners has seen an increase of five percentage points on the previous year, but the proportion of male learners is low and declining. Leaders, managers and governors do not have a strategy to increase the number of male learners. Recently, managers have begun to work with another local provider to provide training in construction skills and house maintenance to alleviate worklessness and poverty and improve the skill base of the local residents.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are good. Governors are well qualified and experienced. They show strong individual and collective commitment to their role. They are well aware that the college is undergoing a process of change and improvement and play a strong part in monitoring progress.
- Support, scrutiny and challenge from the governors are robust. Governors provided much-needed support to the curriculum managers during the period in which the senior management team was not fully in place due to sickness and resignations.
- Each governor has a delegated link role within the college and they are well prepared for these roles through a regular programme of training. This enables them to understand and contribute practical oversight to college aspects including teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum planning and safeguarding practice.
- However, governors have not set the direction to increase the participation levels of males and narrow the achievement gap between learners from white British and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff have received effective training.

They apply their understanding of safeguarding well in principle and practice. As a result, learners feel safe and are safe. Learners are well aware of whom to contact if they need advice or help with a safeguarding concern, particularly designated staff and teachers.

- Leaders, managers and governors have established a positive and dynamic culture of safeguarding and take immediate steps to identify and tackle areas for improvement. For example, they have well-advanced plans to appoint additional points of contact to improve further access to support and help for learners across all courses and learning sites.
- Comprehensive and effective referral arrangements are in place. All safeguarding referrals are followed-up and recorded clearly; inter-agency working is appropriate and effective.
- The large majority of staff have been trained in the 'Prevent' duty and they have sound awareness of British values; they promote these well in lessons.
- Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and how to protect themselves from radicalisation or extremism.
- Learners' understanding of British values is good, each theme is integrated seamlessly into their course induction and as a result, learners have a sound understanding of respect, democracy and fairness. Apprentices' understanding of these topics is less secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across all provision types, with the exception of apprenticeships.
- Tutors set high standards for learners. They ensure respectful behaviour, good-quality work and a commitment to learning. Learners respond well and work hard in lessons, developing their skills and building personal, social skills and skills for future employment. Tutors use discussions, group activities and peer assessment well. These activities contribute very well to the development of learners' speaking and listening skills and highly effective team working. In one lesson, learners worked collaboratively to review their performance in an enterprise activity, identifying successes and areas for development. Learners used the outcomes from the discussions to improve planning for future projects.
- Tutors accurately assess the abilities of every learner when they start their course and use this information well to ensure that they are on the right course at the right level. In the large majority of lessons, tutors make effective use of this information to ensure that tasks and activities meet their needs. However, in a small minority of lessons tutors set work that is too easy for the most able learners.
- Tutors, trainers and assessors are well qualified. They have good knowledge of their subject and of vocational experience of the industries in which apprentices are undertaking training. Most tutors are skilful at using everyday situations to develop learners' English and mathematics skills and ensure that learners understand and use technical language correctly in all vocational areas. In horticulture, learners use technical gardening terms confidently and understand their meanings, for example, 'tilth' to refer to the state of soil under cultivation.

- Tutors use a wide range of approaches successfully to make lessons interesting, to keep learners' focus on the topics taught, build confidence and assess effectively learners' knowledge and understanding. This leads to mostly good progress. Most tutors keep a good pace in lessons, which motivates and stimulates learners; however, in a small minority of lessons tutors do not plan activities to challenge the most able learners. In these lessons, learners have to wait for their peers to finish their work and do not always make sufficiently rapid progress as a result.
- Tutors skilfully use questioning in lessons to check learners' understanding, deepen and extend learning, and reflect on prior learning. Tutors use nominated questions effectively in most lessons to ensure that all learners fully participate, build their confidence and make appropriate progress. Least-able learners respond well to tutors' probing and prompting, enabling them to make progress according to their potential.
- Most tutors monitor learners' skills development and understanding well. Most tutors provide effective verbal and written feedback to show learners how to improve. However, on a few courses, written comments to learners do not always guide learners sufficiently on what they need to do to extend answers and make further progress.
- Tutors make good use of technology to develop learners' skills and to provide access to resources. Learners use their 'smart phones' effectively to develop their research skills, use calculators and dictionaries to improve their mathematics and communication skills. However, tutors do not routinely ensure that full access to technology for all learners, which hinders their skills development. Managers have provided a learning resource centre in response to the request of learners. However, this is not yet fully established.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is a routine and an individualised element of lesson planning. The ethos of the college is one of full inclusivity and learners value each other's contributions. However, information displayed in the college is not fully accessible to learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners develop and maintain good personal, social and independent learning skills, which equip them well for their next steps into further learning or employment. Staff have been highly successful in attracting adults with low prior attainment and those who are new to learning in the United Kingdom to engage in learning. They support them to remain on programmes and progress to their next levels. Some 84% of learners attend classes at level 1 or below. Learners become highly confident in their ability to achieve qualifications and employment. Learners develop an appetite for learning and raise their aspirations for their own as well as their family's future.
- Adults enjoy their learning, are punctual, and conduct themselves very well in lessons. Learners spoke very positively about 'the family atmosphere' in the college. The level of respect for others and peer support are exemplary at welcoming and integrating new learners into college life.
- Learner representatives support their peers to become fully engaged in learning and become motivated to achieve their learning aims and goals. Demonstrating their sound understanding of British values, the representatives gather learners' views on their experiences and take their concerns or suggestions for improvement to the senior managers. As a result of the learners' feedback, managers provided showering facilities

for learners in hospitality, and further seating and computers in the welcoming reception area.

- Learners' development of confidence, self-esteem and communication skills is strong. Inspectors saw many examples and case studies of learners who made rapid progress to improve their confidence and prospects. A significant number of learners who have learning disabilities and difficulties thrive in the college. They run the college bistro, gaining valuable experience and skills needed for the hospitality industry. They develop money-handling skills and build their confidence in social communication.
- Staff provide constructive verbal feedback which helps learners to develop confidence, resilience and independent learning skills. Learners value this approach highly and make improvements to their work.
- Learners develop a sound understanding of what employers require from their employees. Lessons have strong links to employment and skills for work. Learners reflect and discuss how the skills they develop could be useful to employers. Most of the learners are not yet ready for employment and develop medium-term plans to attend college and acquire the relevant skills. Staff provide highly effective, impartial guidance to enable learners to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Apprentices develop highly effective personal, social and employability skills through a good range of on-the-job training activities. They are safe, behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Their motivation levels improve and they aspire to better careers, having secured additional responsibilities at work. They make good contributions to their employers' businesses.
- Learners have a good understanding of health and safety practices in practical workshops. Adult learners are well aware of the dangers online to themselves and to children; they take appropriate precautions to keep themselves and their children safe while using internet.
- Learners know how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation. They are highly vigilant about the dangers posed by individuals and groups through the internet.
- Learners feel safe in the college and in the outreach centres. They have good awareness of bullying and harassment and know how to recognise and deal with such issues including who to contact should the need arise. Learner representatives play a crucial role in this.
- Learners' attendance is high. Managers and staff reinforce the importance of regular attendance. Most learners inform the college if they are likely to be late or absent. Tutors take their 'duty of care' seriously and contact a few absent learners promptly to ensure that learners are safe and remind them about attending the college.
- Learners produce high standards of work and are justifiably proud of their achievements. They talk enthusiastically how their learning has helped them in their lives.
- Learners benefit from timely, good-quality and extensive support from a very well-qualified and experienced team of information, advice and guidance workers. This includes good initial advice and guidance at enrolment and ongoing support. Learners on study programmes are promptly placed in work placements linked to their long-term aims. As a result, they begin to appreciate the demands of work and improve their skills accordingly.

- Unemployed learners gain confidence with using computers and apply for jobs online and develop new skills in their ability to do this. Learners take their responsibility for increasing their skill levels seriously. For example, on computer courses learners develop relevant information technology (IT) skills that prepare them well for the use of technology in the work-place.
- Learners are well prepared for life in modern Britain. In English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, tutors have developed a simple and highly effective explanation of British values and how these relate to them in classes and in their daily lives. Other learners have a sound understanding of these values; however, these need to be further promoted to apprentices, as their understanding is less secure.
- Learners feel safe and have confidence that staff will address any concerns they may have. All staff foster a comfortable and welcoming learning environment.
- Mental well-being is one of the main themes that the college staff and managers take seriously. Staff are fully aware of the needs of the learners and support them well to identify the triggers of distress, strategies to contain them and sources of help that the learners could access.
- Learners benefit from a good range of enrichment activities and learn from each other about their cultures, customs and food. Apprentices do not currently take part in these activities.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- After a substantial decline in the qualification achievement rates across the college provision in 2014/15, the rates have gone up to the high levels previously reached in 2013/14. Low retention rates, the main reason for dip in performance, have improved substantially and are now high.
- On adult learning programmes, the GCSE achievement rates in English and mathematics are high. Most learners complete their courses.
- Learners on ESOL programmes achieve well in substantial numbers in reading and writing at entry levels. This enables them to function more effectively in their daily lives, such as in making appointments, shopping, form-filling, reading with their children and communicating with their children's schools. An increasing number of ESOL learners progress to level 1 and achieve their qualifications. Historically poor retention at lower levels in speaking and listening has skewed the achievement rate in ESOL programmes. More learners stay on their programmes on all ESOL provision, and more are successful.
- The achievement of personal learning objectives is very high. Learners are very satisfied with their levels of progress and improve their confidence and skill levels. Most progress to the next level of learning. However, inspectors identified that in a small minority of cases the learning objectives were not sufficiently specific or measurable. As a result these learners do not make sufficient progress rapidly enough. For example, learners on supported programmes were unaware of their individual targets. The managers had accurately identified this area for improvement and have devised a rigorous action plan to improve the quality of individual learning plans and target-setting in them.
- Apprentices' progression into permanent employment is good. Many apprentices gain

additional responsibilities. Apprentices produce good standards of work, particularly in information communication technology (ICT) and social media.

- In 2013/14 the college managers worked well with Walsall MBC and successfully provided apprenticeship programmes in health and social care. However, in subsequent years, to help reduce local skills shortages, the college managers expanded the provision to several sector areas with very low numbers. This expansion met with a varying degree of success that ranged from excellent to inadequate. The rate of achievement of frameworks is low and has declined. This is mainly due to the low achievement of functional skills, loss of employment in the retail and warehousing sector and the poor performance of subcontractors. The achievement of functional skills for apprentices in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2 has improved marginally but remains low. Retention rates are improving.
- The rates of achievement of qualifications for learners on traineeship programmes, currently not running, have been high. The majority of such learners secured employment. The job outcomes for unemployed adults on Jobcentre Plus programmes are very high.
- The rates of achievement of qualifications on the 16 to 19 study programmes have been improving and are currently high.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- At the time of inspection there were 63 learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes leading to qualifications from entry level to level 2. The majority of learners have a history of poor educational experiences or have learning difficulties or disabilities. Learners are on programmes in horticulture, hospitality, health and social care, childcare, IT courses and developing independence.
- Managers and tutors have high expectations of learners and have successfully planned programmes that balance the development of skills in the classroom with structured work experience to prepare learners for life after college.
- Tutors use questioning well in most lessons to check understanding, promote deeper learning and encourage learners to reflect on prior learning.
- Learners benefit from detailed feedback in class and on assignments on the quality of their work against their course and individual targets and how to improve their skills further. However, the recording of progress against individual targets is less well developed, resulting in a lack of clarity about precisely what progress learners have made.
- Tutors provide good opportunities for learners to apply their English skills to the development of technical vocabulary, contributing well to their preparation for employment. Learners make good progress and achieve well in English. Although learners make good progress in mathematics, staff changes and the transition into college by students from a failing provider have had a negative impact on learners' achievements in mathematics.
- Tutors use their skills and experience of employment very well to make learning interesting and relevant. Well-paced and interesting lessons engage learners and build

their confidence and skills very effectively. For example, in a hospitality theory lesson, learners discussed a variety of outlets, range of products served, relevance to types of customers and employment opportunities. Learners developed their communication skills and used prior knowledge and experience to contribute to the discussion. In a small minority of lessons, tutors are less skilled at setting work that is sufficiently demanding for the most able learners.

- Learners demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety practices in practical workshops. Learners feel safe and are confident to ask for help and support from staff. Learners in level 2 childcare show a good understanding of the range of disposal methods for medical waste and the danger of cross-contamination.
- Learners develop a good range of skills through enterprise activities and tutors prepare learners for the world of work very well. For example, learners arranged a cake sale. They advertised the sale, priced the cakes, spoke with customers and collected money. After the sale, learners reviewed their performance, evaluated their success and planned a further project to prepare Christmas gift boxes for a local shelter with the money made from the sale, benefiting others in their community.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Course portfolios are well organised and have a wide range of evidence reflecting the progress made by the learners. In practical workshops, learners work well and develop good team-building skills. Tutors encourage learners to use all their senses to produce good-quality items. For example, in an art lesson, learners worked in two groups to produce hearts, reflecting cool and warm colours and using a range of textures, colours and materials. The learners went on to produce individual hearts for display, showing a sound understanding of colour, tone and shading.
- Learners develop independent learning and research skills well, equipping them well for their next steps into employment or further study. Tutors set appropriate targets to build on from group activities and to enable learners to use the internet safely and access further learning activities from the college's online virtual learning environment (VLE). Learners can access the newly developed learning resource centre (LRC) if they do not have computer access at home. However, the opening hours for the LRC are currently limited.
- Leaders manage very effectively the individual study programmes to meet learners' needs. Learners on the level 1 IT course negotiated with staff to move class times to maximise their time on campus and to avoid extra travel expenses. Learners are attending well and making good progress on the course.
- Learners benefit from good information, advice and guidance to choose the right course and to plan for work experience placements to support their next steps into further training or into employment. As a result, learners access a wide range of work experience placements that support their progress onto higher-level courses and gain skills for employment.
- Tutors know their learners well and make good use of initial assessment and comprehensive information from parents/careers and other agencies to ensure that learners are following appropriate learning programmes. Tutors manage learning support well in most lessons to enable learners to become more independent and make progress according to their potential.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Adult learners study part-time across a range of subject areas. Of the 1,465 learners, a large majority study English, mathematics or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- Managers work highly effectively with local communities and partnerships to develop programmes that meet learners' needs well. Managers fully recognise the pressures learners have in their everyday lives and design and adjust programmes sensitively to make it easier for learners to attend classes in their neighbourhoods. As a result, the vast majority of learners who have had previously poor learning experiences or have low educational attainment attend classes regularly. Once engaged in learning, most learners enjoy learning and continue to the next level.
- Adults grow in confidence throughout their time in the college and develop particularly good personal and social skills. Learners on ESOL programmes improve their understanding of English in various contexts through much improved listening skills. They converse confidently in their daily lives and at work. Unemployed learners gain a good understanding of what the employers want. In a short period, they become confident at using computers and apply for jobs.
- Tutors are well qualified and experienced in their subjects. They use their skills and expertise well to plan and teach lessons that include a range of interesting learning activities. This motivates learners well. Tutors use discussion effectively to reinforce learning and support learners to exchange ideas and opinions, improving their thinking and communication skills. Learners' written work is of a consistently good standard. Tutors guide ESOL learners to develop good handwriting skills so that they can teach their children.
- The majority of learners have limited experiences of formal learning in recent years. They are carefully guided to work collaboratively in groups, developing good language and communication skills, improving their confidence in themselves and their own abilities. They are thoroughly prepared for examinations. Consequently, they make good progress in lessons and achieve well in examinations, particularly at entry level.
- Learners become proactive and join computer courses to gain additional skills in using software such as spreadsheets that improves their chances of staying in their jobs. Tutors carefully complement their theory skills through effective work-experience placements in childcare settings. Learners raise their aspirations to gain jobs and also care for their children more thoughtfully. Tutors use verbal questioning and peer assessment effectively in lessons to measure individual progress and the understanding of key points in lessons. Their evaluative written comments on learners' work helps learners to improve.
- The large majority of tutors make good use of interactive learning activities in the classroom, giving interest and focus to learning in lessons. In such lessons learners use their smartphones very effectively to participate in quizzes and tests in English. Learners however do not make sufficient use of the resources on the college VLE to reinforce and consolidate learning at times suitable to them. Tutors do not make sufficient use of the additional college computers or tablets available in study areas. This limits the rates of achievement of learners who do not have access to computers at home.
- Learners benefit from good initial advice and guidance at enrolment. Tutors identify

additional support needs promptly and provide ample support in good time to help learners settle in classes. Specialist support for dyslexic learners is good and tailored to meet their needs. All tutors give very good individual support for learners in lessons so that they catch up swiftly with their peers.

- Tutors conduct a comprehensive initial and diagnostic assessment of learners and use this information throughout the extended induction period to place learners on programmes at the correct levels. Many tutors use this information well to set targets for learners to meet their individual needs; however, this practice is not consistently good. Tutors do not identify and fill the gaps in their learning sufficiently quickly. Many do not record this information well. This means that learners do not make a swift start to their learning to consolidate their skills.
- Learners continue to develop mathematics and English through the vocational areas they study. In horticulture, adults understand and use technical terms when describing seeds and plants. In ESOL classes, learners practise their mathematics when calculating population numbers from the local census.
- All staff foster a comfortable and welcoming learning environment. Learners feel safe and feel confident that staff will deal with any concerns they may have. They show courtesy and respect for others with learners from different cultures and backgrounds.
- All learners have an excellent understanding of British values. They have the opportunity to practise and understand democratic processes and discuss the rule of law in lessons. They know how to keep themselves safe from grooming and radicalisation, both online and in their daily lives.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, there were 53 apprentices, primarily on business administration, social media and security programmes, with a few studying on health and social care and accounting courses. Half of the apprentices were aged 16 to 18. Some 80% of the apprentices are on intermediate apprenticeships.
- Apprenticeships provision requires improvement, as too few apprentices successfully complete their full framework within the planned timescale.
- Leadership of the apprenticeship provision has not been effective in providing comprehensive training for all learners. Although the situation has improved, not all current apprentices benefit from the required level of off-the-job training. A small minority of learners who were transferred from another training provider which had lost its contract had undertaken some online training; however, this did not assist their understanding sufficiently.
- Planning of training and assessment has been weak. Although improving, communication between college staff and employers has been too variable in frequency and effectiveness, and this has affected continuity in learning for a significant minority of apprentices. Newly appointed staff were unable to provide the necessary training and assessment in time. Therefore, too many apprentices have been slow in completing their qualifications in time and improving their understanding of how theory relates to practice. The frequency of support and assessment has now improved and the current apprentices are making expected progress.

- Managers are currently reshaping training and enhancing assessors' training skills, and staff are now more adept in developing more individualised programmes that build on apprentices' prior attainment and meet the apprenticeship standards and framework requirements. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these actions.
- Links with employers are more productive now. Employers increasingly take part in reviewing apprentices' progress and set tasks in the workplace to help apprentices complete their qualifications and develop their confidence and skills. Employers speak highly of the good standards of the apprentices' work and value their contribution to their businesses. For example, apprentices enjoy using their initiative in the workplace; they communicate more effectively with colleagues and customers and cope well with additional responsibilities. As a result, an increasing number of apprentices have secured permanent employment and have aspirations to progress to higher levels of qualifications.
- Tutors have improved apprentices' target-setting, which has helped them to get back on track to achieve their framework in the planned period. A large majority of apprentices now benefit from clear written feedback. This helps apprentices understand what they need to do to improve their knowledge of the industry and their practical skills. However, this is not consistently good across the whole provision; a few apprentices do not benefit from sufficiently precise written guidance in relation to the specific tasks they need to practise in their workplace to develop their knowledge and practical skills.
- More apprentices are progressing to sustained employment, assume roles that are more responsible with their employers, and a few get promotion. The large majority of current apprentices produce work at industry standards. Their portfolios demonstrate a good variety of evidence and apprentices take pride in their work.
- Apprentices spoke very highly of the good support they receive from their work supervisors and managers. This includes valuable on-the-job training that challenges them well to sharpen their skills to provide a higher quality of service to customers.
- Apprentices on business administration programmes develop effective telephone communication skills. Apprentices on social media courses work particularly effectively with their colleagues in the sales department to develop brand awareness and propose innovative ways of marketing products to different age groups.
- Current staff have good knowledge of the industry and subject expertise. They make good use of probing and questioning techniques during reviews of progress and theory lessons to check apprentices' understanding. They relate theory well to work contexts, and this helps to engage apprentices to consolidate their learning.
- Most apprentices who have not already done so achieve qualifications in English and/or mathematics to the level required for their framework and many apprentices achieve good computer skills. Apprentices recognise the importance of English and mathematics skills to their jobs and careers and develop these effectively. This helps them do their jobs competently and skilfully. For example, apprentices on security systems courses understand the abbreviations used in the modern metric system of measurement through international units (SI) symbols; they use formulas correctly by multiplying or dividing by power of 10 to ensure that the voltage is safe for them to work on. However, assessors and trainers do not always challenge the most able apprentices to extend their answers, check errors in spelling and use of capital letters, or to develop their note-taking skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55258
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,256
Principal	Mr Jev Raj Bhalla
Telephone number	01922 663000
Website	www.wacc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	62	1,472	20	213	–	28	–	1
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	7	18	6	22	–	–		
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	–							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Manor Farm Community Association Palfrey Community Association Steps to Work Walsall Housing Group Britannia							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal quality and support, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Harmesh Manghra, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Crombie	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Scott	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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