

Inspection of Bury College

Inspection dates: 28 to 31 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Bury College is a large further education college located in the centre of the market town of Bury. It offers courses from foundation to higher education level. Bury College provides apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5 across Greater Manchester.

There are currently 5,362 learners and apprentices at Bury College. Three thousand six hundred young people who are 16 to 18 years old follow A-level and vocational programmes from entry level to level 3. This includes 146 learners who have high needs. Most of the 1,385 adult learners study part time. Almost all of the 351 apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships. Most apprentices study dental nursing or early years at levels 2 and 3. Eighteen learners who have high needs are currently on the New Horizons programme, which is specialist provision for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism.

The college currently works with two subcontractors who provide classroom-based training for learners and apprentices. Seventy-nine young people who are 16 to 18 years old attend the Manchester Mesivta School, where they study a small range of A-level and vocational subjects. There are 19 apprentices studying the level 3 installation electrician and maintenance electrician apprenticeship standard with JTL.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Bury College has a supportive and inclusive environment, where there is a culture of high expectations and mutual respect. Learners and apprentices appreciate the support and encouragement they receive from staff.

Learners and apprentices behave very well in college and at work. Most learners and apprentices attend their classes and enjoy their learning. This includes those who study with subcontractors. Leaders recognise that many learners face significant barriers in their personal lives. A substantial number of young learners have a history of not attending school. Their attendance is steadily improving because of the support they receive from college staff and their parents or guardians.

Most young learners gain the knowledge they need to prepare them for their next steps in education or work. Learners studying level 2 sport learn about sports injuries and the various ways in which steroids affect different parts of the body. They have clear aspirations to become sports teachers, physiotherapists and fitness coaches. Learners know what their next steps are. Most young learners with high needs learn the necessary skills to help them at work and in their daily lives. For example, they can independently walk their dogs. Learners on supported internships confidently supervise children at lunchtime in a children's nursery.

Most adult learners achieve their aim to gain a qualification so that they can pursue a career that will help them to improve their lives and that of their families. Learners on level 3 access to higher education courses develop their academic writing skills to a high standard. They routinely carry out research and accurately reference this research within their written reports. Consequently, they are very well prepared for future learning at university.

Apprentices develop the professional behaviours they need to be successful at work. For instance, level 3 dental nurses efficiently and respectfully manage patients who display challenging behaviour in their surgery. However, too many apprentices have left their apprenticeship before completing.

Learners and apprentices develop confidence as a result of their courses. Adult learners on level 1 essential digital skills courses confidently access the internet to complete universal credit applications and safely carry out online shopping and banking.

Learners and apprentices know who to go to if they have a safeguarding concern about themselves or someone else. They know that staff will act quickly in response to any reports of inappropriate behaviour.

A small minority of learners and apprentices feel frustrated that their learning has been disrupted by the frequent changes in staff at the college.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have established appropriate links with a range of stakeholders. They work closely with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Bury Council. This enables leaders to effectively use information about local and regional skills needs and plan courses to meet these needs.

Leaders have developed beneficial partnerships with local and national education providers. They work effectively with the University of Salford to provide progression opportunities for learners on level 3 access to higher education courses on the nursing, midwifery and allied health professions pathway. This meets the skills gaps within the National Health Service and helps to retain skilled people within the region. A small number of learners benefit from involvement in community projects with partners such as Bury Hospice.

Leaders work with a range of local employers and stakeholders who provide work placements for learners. This enables learners to practise and hone their skills in the workplace. A few employers are invited to deliver presentations as guest speakers to provide information on the sectors in which they work, for instance to apprentices studying level 3 dental nursing and level 3 early years educator apprenticeships. A few stakeholders are involved in the design of the curriculum. Counsellors have worked with staff to design the level 4 therapeutic counselling curriculum to include the cultural differences for counsellors working with asylum seekers and within diverse religious communities. However, leaders do not involve their employers and stakeholders well enough in the planning, design and implementation of most of their courses and programmes.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders and managers have a clear strategy for their curriculums to meet the skills requirements of local employers. They carefully consider the courses they provide for learners and apprentices, including those who have high needs. Most learners progress to higher learning, apprenticeships, employment or self-employment after successfully completing their courses.

Leaders, lecturers and learning and skills coaches ensure that there is a sequential and logical order to the curriculum. For example, adult learners studying level 4 therapeutic counselling firstly learn about ethics, confidentiality and boundaries. After this, they learn about the cultural impact on therapeutic relationships between counsellor and client, and the importance of research in counselling practice. Finally, during their work placement, learners successfully apply their knowledge when counselling clients. As a result, most learners and apprentices gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful at their next stages of learning or at work.

Lecturers and learning and skills coaches are well qualified and experienced to teach their subjects. They routinely update their subject knowledge. For instance, carpentry and joinery lecturers benefit from training in retrofitting properties. Sports lecturers complete trauma training. A-level biology lecturers update their knowledge of epigenetics. Lecturers and learning and skills coaches benefit from a range of training to improve their teaching skills, for instance effective assessment feedback strategies, solo taxonomy and critical knowledge retention. Consequently, most learners and apprentices receive a good standard of training.

Learners who attend the Manchester Mesivta School access a bespoke and well-sequenced A-level curriculum. This meets their individual needs and aspirations. Male learners complete their courses, attend religious college, and then progress to higher learning for their chosen career. Female learners complete their courses and obtain work, for instance in primary schools.

Most lecturers and learning and skills coaches use a variety of effective strategies to teach learners and apprentices. They use assessment well to identify gaps in learning and to inform the curriculum, for example practice papers, quizzes, written assignments, video assessments, discussions and debates. Most lecturers and learning and skills coaches routinely check and consolidate learning before moving to the next topic. Consequently, most learners and apprentices retain learning in their long-term memories. For instance, A-level English literature learners accurately recall learning in relation to feminist readings, the pre-Raphaelite movement and aestheticism.

Most learners and apprentices produce work that is of a high standard. They benefit from effective feedback from lecturers and learning and skills coaches. This helps them to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, most learners' and apprentices' work improves over time.

Most young learners with high needs attend A-level and vocational programmes. Lecturers make good use of the detailed support plans to ensure that they meet each learners' individual needs. They allow extra time for learners to complete tasks and assignments. Lecturers minimise noise in class to promote concentration. Consequently, young learners with high needs make equivalent progress to that of their peers. However, leaders do not effectively track the progress that the young learners with high needs on the New Horizons programme make towards their education and healthcare plan targets. This means that these young learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Learners and apprentices receive effective careers information. This helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps. They attend talks from staff at universities, the National Health Service, the Lancashire Constabulary, Civil Service and Armed Forces. Most learners and apprentices aspire to have careers in a wide range of sectors such as health, finance, sports and education.

Leaders have a clear oversight of the quality of their provision. They know their key strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use appropriate quality improvement processes. They undertake lesson visits and work scrutiny of college and subcontractor staff. They use information collated from these activities to expedite improvements. For instance, in level 3 engineering, lecturers have recently strengthened their use of learners' starting points. Each learner now receives a curriculum that meets their individual needs.

A small minority of apprentices have not achieved their apprenticeships on time. This includes the apprentices who are subcontracted to JTL. Leaders have appropriate actions in place so that apprentices can swiftly complete their apprenticeships. The number of apprentices who have not completed their apprenticeships on time is quickly reducing.

Around half of apprentices who enrolled onto an apprenticeship left their programmes before completing them. This was largely because apprentices had mental health struggles during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, or they did not fully understand the high expectations of their final assessments. Subsequently, leaders have strengthened the initial advice and guidance that apprentices receive at the start of their programme. Apprentices now receive comprehensive information in relation to the apprenticeship's academic expectations and the end-point assessments. Of the apprentices who remained on programme, almost all are successful in their final assessments, with just over half of those apprentices receiving a distinction grade. Most remain in employment after completing their apprenticeships.

Leaders have appropriate arrangements in place for the management of subcontracted provision. They meet regularly with their subcontractors. Leaders discuss the quality of training that learners and apprentices receive, staff training and any current safeguarding issues.

Governors are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their roles. They understand their responsibilities well. Senior leaders provide suitable information about the quality of education. This includes subcontractors. Governors routinely hold senior leaders to account, for instance to ensure that those apprentices who have not completed their apprenticeships on time, swiftly achieve. While staffing levels are more stable now, governors and senior leaders acknowledge that learners and apprentices have had disruption to their training because of the changes in staff.

Leaders and managers place a sufficient priority on the workload and well-being of staff. They provide an employee assistance programme to support staff with a range of mental health and well-being issues. However, a small minority of staff who responded to the staff survey do not feel that leaders and managers are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are appropriately trained to carry out their roles. They carry out effective checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work at the college. The safeguarding team records referrals comprehensively. Staff work with appropriate agencies to ensure that learners and apprentices receive the full support they need. Staff benefit from training on the awareness of self-harm, drugs and alcohol misuse.

Learners and apprentices work safely in practical workshops and at work. Young learners on level 1 carpentry and joinery courses confidently and safely use tools such as chisels, routers and planers when crafting woodworking joints.

Learners and apprentices know that sexual harassment and sexual violence are unacceptable behaviours. They fully understand the importance of consent. Learners and apprentices know that it is inappropriate to make sexist remarks or tell sexist jokes.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that they prioritise support for those apprentices who have not completed their apprenticeships on time, to help them to swiftly catch up and complete their apprenticeships and subsequently be able to move on to the next stages of their careers.
- Leaders should continue to strengthen the initial advice and guidance they give to apprentices so that they clearly understand the academic expectations and that of the end-point assessments.
- Leaders should swiftly put in place robust progress measures for their young learners with high needs on the New Horizons programme to ensure that they know the accurate progress learners are making towards their education and healthcare plan targets, so that these young learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners and apprentices attend their classes frequently so that they remain on their courses and achieve their qualifications.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130498
Address	Market Street Bury Greater Manchester BL9 0BG
Contact number	01612808280
Website	www.burycollege.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Charlie Deane
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	18 to 21 September 2018
Main subcontractors	JTL Manchester Mesivta School

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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