

Oldham College

General further education college

Inspection dates

4–7 December 2018

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders, managers and governors have rectified successfully most of the weaknesses that were identified at the previous inspection.
- Governance is effective. Governors have a good range of skills that have enabled them to support the improvement of the college's financial position and the quality of education and training.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and tutors have worked relentlessly to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good.
- Learners and apprentices develop good personal, social and employability skills that support them effectively in their learning and training. Most progress to meaningful and relevant destinations related to their studies.
- Overall achievement rates have improved over the past three years across the whole provision. There has been a significant improvement in the number of apprentices who complete their programmes within their planned timeframes.
- Leaders, governors and managers work highly effectively with employers and other partners to ensure that the curriculum meets local and regional needs and skills priorities.
- The principal and staff have continued to nurture the culture of inclusion across the college. Staff, learners and apprentices embrace and promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity.
- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour is exemplary. They display mutual tolerance and respect towards each other, staff and visitors.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from an extensive range of learning resources and specialist accommodation, including industry-standard equipment.
- Attendance rates, although improved, are not yet high enough, particularly in English and mathematics lessons.
- Improvement strategies have not yet brought about a rapid enough improvement for all learners and in all subjects. The self-assessment process requires further development for it to be a useful improvement tool.
- Tutors do not challenge a minority of the most able learners sufficiently in lessons to help them make the progress of which they are capable.
- Qualification outcomes for learners on GCSE English and mathematics courses remain too low.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Oldham College specialises in offering technical and professional education and training for learners and apprentices aged 16 and above. It provides courses in a wide range of subject areas, from entry level to advanced level, and apprenticeships that align to local and regional needs and skills priorities. Oldham College serves the local community of Oldham.
- Levels of deprivation across the borough are ranked among the highest in the country. The college's cohort is socio-economically and culturally diverse, with over two thirds of its learners being from the most deprived areas. The college has learners from over 50 countries with almost half of the college population coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The age profile of the population of the town is younger than the United Kingdom average, with 34.2% of its working-age population in the 25- to 44-year-old age group. The number of learners in Oldham's schools achieving five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (previously A* to C), including both English and mathematics, although improving, is below the national rate. Just under half of all 16- to 18-year-old learners enter the college without having achieved qualifications in English and mathematics, with only a quarter having achieved high grades in these subjects at GCSE.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance rates across all courses, particularly in English and mathematics lessons for 16- to 18-year-old learners and adults, so that they are aligned to college targets. Ensure that all learners attend punctually.
- Improve the rigour of improvement strategies, so that leaders, managers and governors bring about a rapid improvement in the small number of subject areas that are still performing below expected standards.
- Improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that the most able learners achieve the high grades of which they are capable.
- Improve the qualification outcomes for learners on GCSE English and mathematics courses to ensure that learners improve their grades and achieve the high grades that they will need for the next stages in their learning, training or employment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and governors have focused relentlessly on improving the college's financial position and the quality of education and training. They have been successful in returning the college to a stable financial position while investing significantly in improving the accommodation and resources at the college. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear and ambitious plan for the further development of Oldham College. The plan focuses specifically on four strategic priorities relating to delivering a high-quality provision, developing technical specialisms, preparing learners and apprentices for successful employment, and working effectively with local businesses and communities.
- Leaders and managers have raised staff's, learners' and apprentices' expectations. They set challenging 'milestone' targets for the progress of learners and apprentices at course and departmental level. Leaders and managers monitor performance against targets frequently and hold staff to account when targets are not achieved. Where progress is slow, they intervene quickly to bring about improvement. As a result, the large majority of learners and apprentices now make at least the progress expected of them on their courses.
- Leaders have invested significantly in the development of staff to improve teaching, learning and assessment. They have worked with external partners to develop and implement the 'teaching for distinction' programme to improve tutors' and assessors' teaching practices. Leaders and managers monitor the impact of this training on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment frequently through lesson observations and learning walks. Where weak practice is identified, managers provide further intensive support and development to help staff to improve. If staff do not improve their performance, leaders and managers take appropriate action, and staff consequently leave the college.
- While the ongoing self-assessment process helps leaders and managers to identify strengths and weaknesses in the college's provision, the self-assessment report does not identify or evaluate sufficiently all areas of weakness. The associated development plan does not have precise enough or measurable targets. As a result, not all subject areas have made rapid enough improvement.
- Leaders and managers have developed highly effective partnerships with employers, the local authority, schools and the community. They work with partners to plan and develop courses that are responsive to local needs and skills priorities for Oldham, as well as opportunities within the wider region of Greater Manchester. For example, they have worked recently with the local council to provide apprenticeships in horticulture to meet identified skills gaps.
- The principal and his staff have successfully maintained the culture and ethos of inclusion. Staff and learners embrace and promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity. Learners participate in a wide range of activities that develop their understanding and

awareness of the different cultures that exist within their communities, for example in the celebration of different faiths and festivals such as Eid.

- There is good promotion of British values within lessons and through displays around the college campus. As a result, learners display positive behaviour, tolerance and mutual respect in lessons and throughout the college. Over nine tenths of the high number of staff who completed the staff survey said that they are proud to be a member of staff at the college.

The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, the board of governors has been strengthened. Governors have a wide range of skills and expertise, including in areas such as further education and skills, and finance, to provide support and challenge to senior leaders. As a result, the college has strengthened its financial position and improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors have a good oversight of the quality of education and training at the college. They receive reports that contain clear and accurate information about learners' and apprentices' progress. Consequently, they provide challenge on areas of underperformance and hold senior leaders to account to bring about further improvement.
- Governors use their expertise to link with curriculum areas within the college to provide additional scrutiny and support to bring about improvement. For example, governors use their expertise in working with learners with high needs to advise leaders and managers on providing specialist resources.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have in place comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure that staff know how to recognise and report signs of potential safeguarding concerns.
- The designated safeguarding officer has completed appropriate training to carry out the role effectively. She has ensured that training for staff is targeted to raise awareness of safeguarding concerns for vulnerable learners in the Oldham area, for example in how to recognise and report the mental health concerns of learners, forced marriage and honour-based violence and abuse.
- Safeguarding concerns are accurately recorded and monitored frequently by the safeguarding team. Staff have effective links with external partners to support learners and apprentices, and to keep them safe, for example through attendance at meetings for learners who have child protection plans. Managers work closely with the local authority and the police to ensure that they have a good awareness of local issues and to promote social cohesion across Oldham.
- Managers ensure that staff and governors receive appropriate 'Prevent' duty training. They have developed and maintain effective links with the local 'Prevent' duty coordinator.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and tutors have worked relentlessly to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have invested wisely in a range of staff development initiatives. These have had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of learners' and apprentices' experiences, which are now good.
- Most learners are placed on the appropriate course at the correct level. This is due primarily to the introduction of the 'right learner, right level, right course' initiative. Most learners and apprentices now remain on their courses and achieve their qualifications. Learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding are enrolled on courses that meet their learning needs and interests, and that help them progress successfully towards their education, health and care plan goals.
- Current learners have effective long-term targets that help them to achieve their qualifications. Tutors now monitor learners' and apprentices' progress much more rigorously. Learners and apprentices who fall behind are identified at an early stage. Tutors take appropriate action to help them to catch up as quickly as possible and make expected, or better, progress.
- Tutors have good subject knowledge, relevant qualifications and professional experience. They make effective use of their experience when they tutor and assess learners and apprentices. Vocational tutors help learners and apprentices to become familiar with the industry that they are preparing to enter. Similarly, tutors who teach learners with additional needs, including high needs, have appropriate qualifications. They are skilled in supporting learners with their educational, health and care requirements.
- Learners have access to a good range of learning resources and specialist accommodation that help them develop industry-standard knowledge and skills in preparation for employment. For example, in hairdressing and beauty therapy, learners use industry-standard equipment and products. Learners in painting and decorating develop increasingly complex painting and wallpapering skills in purpose-built 'bays'. However, a minority of classrooms are too small for the large classes that use them.
- Many learners and apprentices receive prompt and helpful feedback on the accuracy and quality of their written work. Many are guided on what they need to do to achieve a higher grade or a better standard of work. Most apprentices at all levels receive effective feedback to assist them to improve their knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours. However, a small number of adult learners do not receive high-quality feedback routinely. Their spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not identified. Consequently, these learners often make the same errors repeatedly.
- Tutors' planning for learning is good. They set clear objectives at the start of lessons, so that learners know what they should achieve. Tutors question learners effectively to check their learning and understanding. Tutors' questioning skills were a weakness at the previous inspection.
- A small minority of the most able learners are still insufficiently challenged. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. A minority of tutors of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) do not match learning to the needs and abilities of each learner in the class. For example, a small number of learners are given work that is too difficult for them

and this slows their learning and hinders their progress. Reluctant and quiet learners in functional skills English and mathematics classes sit at the rear of the room and they are not engaged sufficiently in learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour in lessons, around the college and at work is exemplary. Learners respect the views of their peers and tutors. In a very small minority of instances, leaders, managers and tutors take immediate and effective action to challenge learners and apprentices where their behaviour is not of the expected standard.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from impartial careers information, advice and guidance that help them to make accurate and informed decisions about their future career aspirations. Learners and apprentices receive effective advice and guidance through the college's 'careers hub' before they start and during their programmes of learning and training. Learners and apprentices supplement the careers advice and guidance that they receive in the college by making good use of the Greater Manchester 'This is Me' tool. This supports them further in identifying future careers and helps them with writing a CV, job searches and 'top tips' for job interviews. The 'job shop' provides effective information, advice and guidance for learners who are looking to secure an apprenticeship.
- Learners attend meaningful external work-experience placements that develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the workplace and help them to explore their future career aspirations. Work-experience and work-related activities are embedded across all 16 to 19 study programmes and the adult learning provision. Initiatives such as the mentoring programmes 'accelerate' for high-performing learners, and 'elevate' for learners who need direction and support, help learners to aspire to achieve positive career ambitions. Leaders' and managers' focus on the importance of work-experience and work-related activities helps learners to develop confidence and achieve their ambitions.
- All learners benefit from a broad enrichment programme that promotes learners' personal and social skills, and supports them, for example, in staying healthy. Activities range from options such as football, basketball, futsal, table tennis and climbing, to qualifications in first aid and sign language, as well as trips and visits and volunteering opportunities. At enrolment, learners are asked to identify their level of activity outside college. Staff use a Sport England initiative to target 'inactive' learners to encourage them to participate in a variety of sports and healthy activities while they attend the college. Of the 218 learners identified as 'inactive', 210 are now engaged regularly in sporting or health-based activities.
- Leaders work effectively with partner schools to identify young people who have had poor attendance at school or who have not attended school for a significant amount of time. As a result, leaders have introduced an initiative to help the hard-to-reach, 'at-risk-on-entry' young people to attend college and remain on their programmes. These young people account for a quarter of the college's 16- to 18-year-old cohort. The initiative is having a positive impact on helping these learners to improve their behaviours, achievements and life chances.
- Learners' and apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics are identified accurately. Tutors set short-term learning targets for each learner in English and

mathematics that focus on their individual learning needs. As a result, most learners and apprentices on functional skills English and mathematics courses achieve their qualifications. However, learners' achievement of good passes and high grades in GCSE English and mathematics remains too low.

- Most learners and apprentices are enthusiastic and highly motivated. They take pride in their work, are well prepared for learning and enjoy their learning and training. They are keen to succeed. For example, learners and apprentices in hairdressing, plumbing and motor vehicle maintenance develop a good range of knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours. They realise that when they obtain their qualifications, their chances of progressing to or in employment are good. In adult GCSE mathematics lessons, learners enjoy their learning and participate fully in activities, despite many of them stating that they have had a very negative experience of learning mathematics previously.
- Too many learners do not attend their lessons. Leaders and managers have invested extensively in a large range of initiatives to ensure that learners attend their lessons regularly and on time. However, while improving, attendance rates are still too low for college-based courses, particularly for English and mathematics courses. Punctuality is poor in a minority of lessons. This leads to disruption for other learners in the lessons.
- Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of what they need to do if they have any concerns about their safety. However, 16- to 18-year-olds and adult learners do not have a good enough depth of understanding of the full range of threats from radicalisation and extremism. A minority of ESOL learners have particular difficulty in expressing their clear understanding of safeguarding and wider aspects of extremism and radicalisation. For learners with complex needs and anxieties, the college's procedures for 'lock down' are contextualised effectively, so that learners do not become anxious and afraid.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Leaders and managers have continued and sustained the improvements to achievement rates as identified at the previous inspection. They have made clear improvements to overall achievement rates over the past three years across the college. Achievement rates for level 2 courses, for both 16- to 18-year-olds and adult learners, improved significantly and are high. Achievement rates for level 3, 16- to 18-year-olds increased markedly, but require further improvement in a few subject areas. Achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes have increased considerably over the past three years and are now high. The large majority of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship, and, of those, most now achieve within their planned timeframe.
- A high proportion of learners who enrol on functional skills examinations in English and mathematics are successful. Achievement rates in functional skills in English have improved over the past three years, for both 16- to 18-year-olds and adults. The achievement rate for adults at levels 1 and 2 in English has improved significantly. However, achievement rates in mathematics have declined slightly at level 1 for 16- to 18-year-olds. Achievement rates for adults who attempt functional skills examinations in mathematics are high across all levels.

- Leaders and managers have rectified most of the differences between levels and subjects that were identified at the previous inspection. Only a few subjects continue to underperform, for example care professions, sport, travel and public services.
- The vast majority of learners and apprentices progress to meaningful destinations, including gaining promotion in the workplace. Learners who remain at the college progress successfully to the next level within the subject that they are studying. Learners who have additional need or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those for whom the college receives high-needs funding, make good progress in achieving their qualifications, personal goals and independence.
- Leaders and managers have implemented successful strategies to rectify the achievement gaps between different groups of learners. The vast majority of achievement gaps, identified at the previous inspection, have been narrowed. For example, male learners now perform slightly better than female learners.
- Learners' and apprentices' work is of a high standard. They take pride in their work. Learners develop good practical skills: for example, learners on electrical programmes can wire a range of circuits at an industry-standard level appropriate for electrical installation work. Joinery learners can produce a variety of different joints with precision. Learners on adult employability programmes develop useful skills that they can apply in the workplace and at home. For example, learners can make dance outfits for their children and as a result have been able to save money. Some have ambitions to become self-employed tailors.
- Learners and apprentices develop confidence and self-esteem because of their learning and training. They develop the technical knowledge, understanding and behaviours that will help them in the next stage of their education, training, employment or independent living. Most learners who have high needs complete appropriate qualifications that match their aspirations and help them to gain employment, paid and voluntary.
- Too few learners achieve good passes and high grades, particularly 16- to 18-year-olds, in GCSE English and mathematics. Learners' achievement of high grades in mathematics improved slightly in 2017/18, but from a very low starting point. While a high proportion of learners gain their qualifications, a small number of 16- to 18-year-olds on advanced level courses do not achieve consistently the high grades of which they are capable, for example in applied science, business, sport development coaching and public services.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Approximately 1,987 learners, including 92 with SEND, are enrolled on study programmes across a wide range of vocational subjects. An additional 72 learners who are over 19 years of age attend study programmes. Study programmes account for over half of the college's provision. Two thirds of learners study at entry level, level 1 and level 2. The remainder study at level 3.
- Tutors use effective teaching practices in lessons and practical workshops. Most set high expectations of learners. For example, tutors use effective questioning techniques that

probe learners' understanding and extend their knowledge even further. As a result, learners develop higher level skills, such as analysis and critical evaluation.

- Tutors plan their lessons carefully to ensure that learners develop both subject knowledge and confidence through well-structured and sequenced tasks. In most lessons, activities meet the diverse range of individual needs and abilities. As a result, learners participate fully and complete tasks that help them to learn and understand concepts successfully. The majority of tutors challenge learners to work beyond their current level of study. For example, in a level 1 pathway to vocational health and social care lesson, learners developed the skills of building a reasoned argument through a class debate on the implications of the legalisation of cannabis.
- Tutors embed English and mathematical skills effectively into learning and promote the use of vocationally related terminology and concepts. For example, in level 3 hairdressing, tutors challenge learners with probing questions to, 'say it again and to say it better'. This encourages them to use industry terminology routinely and correctly, such as how to describe 'avant-garde' in relation to the hairdressing industry. In an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, learners worked out correctly the costs of the hardware required to build a computer within a given budget and with set percentages for over- and underspend.
- Tutors provide helpful and regular feedback to learners to support them to identify their progress and what they need to do to improve their work further. For example, in level 3 brickwork, learners improved a complex arch following detailed and specific feedback on how to ensure that the arch had been measured accurately using the correct angles. Tutors support learners successfully to improve their writing skills. They identify accurately common mistakes in learners' written work. As a result, most learners do not repeat mistakes.
- Tutors have a rich knowledge of their subject that reflects industry standards. Consequently, they use effective industry-related learning strategies to engage and motivate learners to develop their skills and make good progress. For example, in a travel and tourism lesson, the tutor used their vocational knowledge to set a case study on a rescue mission to pick up passengers following an emergency landing. Learners were required to use both subject knowledge and mathematical skills to solve the problem.
- Learners benefit from high-quality, industry-standard practical resources and workshops that they value and respect. For example, the motor vehicle workshop is set out to replicate a functioning, professional workshop. Learners develop their technical skills successfully using contemporary car components, such as engines, to practise their fault-finding skills. Learners on plumbing and electrical courses benefit from specific 'bays' where they can practise their skills in specific installations, including underfloor heating, solar panels and domestic wiring.
- Learners who have additional support needs benefit from effective support, both in their lessons and outside. Support staff are well qualified for their roles. Staff engage learners skilfully and ensure that they participate fully in their learning and make the progress of which they are capable. There are good relationships between in-class support staff and tutors. There are no discernible gaps in the achievement rates of those who receive additional support and those who do not.
- Learners benefit from well-planned and high-quality work-experience placements. Consequently, they develop their knowledge and understanding of the workplace and the

skills they need to obtain to successfully gain employment. One large local employer offers highly supported work-experience placements with helpful preparation for employment. As a result, four of the six learners successfully gained employment with the company. Learners benefit from a wide range of additional employment-related learning activities through guest speakers, masterclass workshops in a range of areas, visits to employers and higher education establishments, and workshops to develop high-quality CVs and to improve their interview skills. Consequently, learners can make informed choices about their next steps and know what to expect.

- Current learners have sufficiently challenging long-term targets and most are making expected or better progress from their starting points. Where learners fall behind, they receive supportive interventions that help them to catch up, and these are having a positive impact on helping learners to achieve their targets.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Approximately 1,423 adults are enrolled on a wide range of adult learning programmes, most of whom study part time. Almost two thirds study at entry level, with a quarter of learners studying at level 2. The remainder study at level 1 and level 3.
- The vast majority of learners enjoy their studies and make good progress. They are proud of their work and develop increased levels of confidence and self-esteem. In access to higher education courses, learners aspire to become nurses, midwives, physiotherapists, solicitors or legal executives, and other business professionals. They are very aware of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) points that they need to achieve for each pathway. As a result, they strive to achieve the necessary grades and are successful. Access to higher education learners develop a good standard of academic writing skills that will help them in future learning.
- Adult learners develop good oracy skills and confidence. In ESOL lessons, tutors encourage learners to speak to their peers, so that they find out more about each other and their unique backgrounds, for example the types of food they like to eat and what personal possession has a particularly significant meaning for them.
- Learners develop creative and practical skills to professional industry standards. They use a range of industry-standard machinery and equipment confidently and safely. Learners are proud of their work and how quickly they have developed the skills needed for the industry sector in which they aspire to work. For example, learners on textile courses produce garments such as t-shirts, bags and a range of soft furnishings that demonstrate the high levels of skills that are required in the workplace.
- Learners develop effective work-related skills. These skills support learners successfully to change careers or to help those who wish to enter a profession for the first time. Learners learn about self-employment as well as managing staff and the importance of continuing professional development within the industry.
- Learners demonstrate good debating skills. Their contributions to various discussions are mature and professional. They mirror the professional standards expected from the sectors in which they aim to work.
- Learners show high levels of mutual respect and tolerance for other people's viewpoints. For example, health and social care learners discuss sensitive and emotive topics around

in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatments and women's rights on abortion. Many learners volunteer relevant examples from personal experiences that are clearly valued and appreciated by their peers.

- Tutors are well qualified. They use their professional experience to good effect by ensuring that learners fully understand and use technical terminology competently. In criminology and law lessons, tutors provide learners with interesting scenarios. For example, learners have to decide how they would advise a client featured in the scenario with the most beneficial way to plead in court for damages. They use a range of legal terms such as the meaning of 'volenti non fit injuria' and refer effectively to legal precedents to support their arguments.
- Learners benefit from comprehensive feedback from tutors on the various skills and techniques they develop. Oral and written feedback from tutors challenges and encourages learners to improve the standard of their work. However, a minority of learners in ESOL lessons have difficulty with their handwriting. As a result, their work is untidy. ESOL tutors do not assess learners' work in lessons routinely. When learners' work is assessed, feedback is brief and does not help learners consistently to improve their work. As a result, a minority of learners continue to make the same errors in formally assessed work.
- Tutors support learners who are absent from lessons to catch up quickly. For example, tutors set access to higher education learners and ESOL learners additional work in advance of their absence or provide additional classes when they return. However, tutors do not record and monitor routinely whether learners have completed the work and to the required standard.
- In GCSE mathematics, learners are confident and can explain concepts clearly. As a result, they can determine where they have made errors and can correct their mistakes accurately. They are delighted when they achieve the correct answers to complicated problems, for example when calculating indices and reciprocals. Tutors set appropriate short- and long-term targets and milestones. These help learners to make good progress in their GCSE mathematics courses.
- Attendance and punctuality rates in several ESOL adult classes are too low. This disrupts their learning and inhibits their progress.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college has 815 apprentices in learning across a wide range of sector areas. The large majority of apprentices are on health and social care, business administration, construction trades, and hair and beauty programmes. The vast majority of apprentices are on a range of frameworks and standards programmes at level 2 and level 3. A small number of higher level apprentices follow programmes in health and social care, and legal studies.
- Leaders and managers plan framework- and standards-based apprenticeships effectively. The apprenticeship provision meets the principles and requirements of apprenticeships fully. Most apprentices make good progress on their apprenticeship programmes and complete within the planned timescale. Around a fifth of apprentices are on standards programmes. They are working successfully towards their end-point assessment (EPA)

and both apprentices and employers are well informed about the process and principles of the EPA, including pass, merit and distinction grades.

- Staff work effectively with employers. Almost all employers are positive about their experience with college staff and appreciate the level of communication, support and guidance that they are given. They value the new ideas and knowledge that apprentices bring into their businesses. Many invest significantly in their apprentices and provide effective professional development. Employers support their apprentices in achieving their apprenticeship, and often provide opportunities for promotion. For example, with one employer, the apprentice was supported by several members of staff who themselves had started out as an apprentice with the same employer and had been promoted through the company.
- Employers develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours thoroughly. In on-the-job training, apprentices are set clear and ambitious targets. Assessors and employers work productively together to ensure that apprentices make good progress and that corrective action is taken quickly if they fall behind. A very small number of apprentices do not develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours because employers do not test adequately the apprentice's progress in the workplace. Consequently, these apprentices are not challenged sufficiently to achieve their full potential.
- Classroom-based off-the-job training provides high-quality training that enables apprentices to enhance their workplace performance. This training is attended regularly by apprentices and supports effectively the development of their knowledge and understanding. However, in a small minority of classroom sessions, the application of theory to practice is less effective. For example, in a mathematics lesson, roofing tiles were used as an example of how to determine spatial awareness. This was useful for the construction apprentices in the lesson, but dental hygiene apprentices struggled to understand the context and how they could apply it to their own workplace practice.
- Apprentices feel safe, both in college and in the workplace. They know whom they should contact and the processes available should they need support or advice. They are well prepared in relevant sector areas for the health and safety needs of the industry in which they work. The vast majority of apprentices understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and are able to identify confidently specific extremist groups related to the Oldham area. Employers receive detailed and effective information on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, and how to support apprentices in the workplace.
- Apprentices speak knowledgeably about equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, an apprentice in a healthcare setting was able to say why comments on medical records dating from previous decades would now not be appropriate. She knew how to manage the information in consideration of the new general data protection regulation (GDPR). In a few training sessions, apprentices were aware fully of British values, but did not demonstrate a depth of understanding of how they could apply them to their workplace.
- Apprentices are courteous, respectful and professional. They understand how their conduct and behaviour affect the reputation and business of their employer. They develop strong communication skills, enabling them to work effectively with and manage colleagues, clients and customers.
- Apprentices receive effective oral and written feedback that helps them to improve their knowledge and practical skills. Apprentices know what they have done successfully and what they need to do to improve their work. Feedback includes and supports the

development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills. In a small minority of off-the-job training sessions, tutors do not assess apprentices' work regularly enough.

- Apprentices' develop their English and mathematical skills effectively in the workplace. For example, construction apprentices can successfully use scaled plans to calculate the correct quantity of materials required to complete work for customers. Tutors have considerable expertise in their specialist field and use this effectively to support apprentices. The vast majority of tutors use technical language fluently and support apprentices to do the same. For example, in horticultural lessons, apprentices learn and remember the botanical names for the plants they use.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college receives funding for 100 learners with high needs; of these, 50 are on programmes specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including 12 learners who are on supported internships. The remainder are on level 2 and level 3 vocational study programmes.
- Leaders and managers use high-needs funding effectively to support learning. For example, the recent introduction of the independent living flat and café allows learners on programmes specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to develop successfully the skills that they will need for independence and work.
- Staff are highly qualified and experienced in working with learners with high needs. They have specific subject knowledge and behaviour support skills that ensure that learners participate fully in lessons and make good progress. Tutors and support staff benefit from a range of training and resources to enable them to effectively support the learning, social and healthcare needs of learners with high needs. Most staff are qualified to administer medication, including rescue medication for learners with complex medical and health conditions.
- Staff who have specialist knowledge and understanding of learners with high needs provide highly effective information and support for their colleagues in other areas of the college, including non-teaching areas. This ensures that staff apply a consistent approach across the college to supporting learners with high needs, including the application of intervention strategies where necessary.
- Managers and the wider staff team carry out thorough and accurate assessments of learners' starting points at the start of their programmes. These inform the planning of learners' courses and ensure that they are on the right course for their needs and aspirations. The multidisciplinary approach to target setting and monitoring is highly effective. All staff work together to plan learning and additional support requirements that learners need so that they achieve their aspirational targets both academically and personally. However, for a small number of learners, tutors do not routinely break down targets into easily identifiable steps that the learner is able to understand and describe.
- Arrangements for learners joining and leaving the college are highly effective. They are carefully timed and comprehensive. Learners benefit from regular visits and contact with the college before they start. Tutors work closely with parents and carers to plan their programmes of study. Learners visit the classrooms and specialist areas that they will use when they are at the college. They meet with key staff who will be working with them.

These activities reduce learners' anxieties and prepare them thoroughly for joining the college. Staff plan effectively for learners leaving the college. They liaise with local authorities and parents to provide information that supports learners to move successfully on to the right destination for their needs and aspirations.

- Most staff use skilful questioning techniques that encourage learners to deepen their knowledge and understanding and help them to develop new skills. Learners with low confidence are encouraged to speak in lessons and, with support, are able to complete new tasks and activities successfully.
- Most tutors include English and mathematical concepts effectively in lessons. For example, learners with the most complex needs are supported to use correct grammar and punctuation in their work. Learners on programmes specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop skills that help them to develop independence skills successfully. For example, they are able to budget effectively and identify accurately the different quantities of ingredients they will need for cooking a specific meal. As a result, learners develop the skills that they need to move successfully into adulthood and future independent living arrangements.
- Tutors assess and monitor learners on all courses robustly. Tutors are fully aware of the outcomes in individuals' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Tutors monitor effectively what learners have achieved and what they have yet to achieve. They provide useful feedback in lessons. For learners on programmes that do not lead to a qualification, tutors ensure that each learner's programme is individualised and concentrates on the learner's strengths and aspirations as well as the expected outcomes on the EHC plan. For example, learners on preparing for work courses take part in performing arts sessions to raise their confidence. Video evidence shows clearly that learners are able to speak clearly and more confidently and to make eye contact. They clearly enjoy their learning experience.
- Tutors set high expectations for attendance and punctuality. They promote learners' awareness of their personal responsibility for good timekeeping and attendance at college and in the workplace. They challenge poor attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance in the vast majority of lessons and at work placements is good. Where learners are absent, tutors are aware of the reasons for non-attendance. They put in place effective activities to ensure that learners are able to catch up. Tutors set high expectations for behaviour and, where appropriate, apply the dress code and the appropriate use of mobile telephones.
- Learners access highly effective, meaningful and purposeful work experience. Employers value highly the support they receive from staff to offer and sustain good-quality work experience for learners on programmes specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Supported internships are particularly effective. Employers report that learners' work is of a high standard and makes a positive contribution to their business. Staff are ambitious about learners' ability to access work, particularly paid employment, and most do. Job coaches and employers set relevant targets for work placements that are relevant and help learners gain the skills they need for adulthood. Learners speak highly of their experiences and recognise how they help them to find employment when they leave the college.
- In a small minority of instances, staff do not implement the adaptations and adjustments that learners need to help them in their learning. For example, learners who require

adaptations to the environment and specialist computer hardware, such as a large mouse, a small flat keyboard and rise-and-fall tables, do not receive them routinely. However, during the inspection, once identified, leaders provided sufficient additional rise-and-fall tables for learners on programmes specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- In a minority of lessons, the deployment of support staff is not matched to learners' individual needs. As a result, learners are not supported to engage in learning to the best of their ability. Consequently, these learners do not make the progress of which they are capable as effectively as their peers in these lessons.
- In a small number of lessons, learners are unable to express themselves sufficiently, as tutors do not encourage them to use communication strategies and aids effectively enough.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130505
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,396
Principal/CEO	Mr Alun Francis
Telephone number	0161 785 4000
Website	www.oldham.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	783	962	662	352	697	335	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	229	175	159	232	1	19		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	100							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

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

Inspection team

Suzanne Wainwright, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Price	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Pauline Hagen	Ofsted Inspector
Debra Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Angie Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Jonny Wright	Ofsted Inspector
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