

Newbury College

Address: Monks Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7TD

Unique reference number (URN): 130602

Inspection report: 24 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

1. Inclusion, leadership and governance, and contribution to

meeting skills needs

Expected standard



Expected standard

Contribution to meeting skills needs

Expected standard 

Leaders understand clearly the skills needs, employment priorities and education landscape in the region from their work with employers and stakeholders. Leaders respond by providing courses and training to meet these needs. In adult learning, courses help those furthest from work to gain the skills to move into employment. In apprenticeships, leaders provide high-level training for specialist engineering businesses in this skills shortage sector.

Employers and other stakeholders help design or contribute to the curriculums. Employers in construction work with staff to plan learning to include heat pump installation and maintenance in response to a growing need for these skills. Industry experts in sport teach young learners leadership skills and information about nutrition for elite athletes. Staff from community partners, such as Educafe, help learners for whom English is not their first language prepare for interviews. Local employers provide work placements for learners and supported internships for learners with high needs.

The curriculums enable learners and apprentices to develop the skills they need for employment, further learning and independent living. In engineering, apprentices develop the technical knowledge and critical thinking skills to solve problems. Adults completing online courses acquire specialist knowledge in mental health and special educational needs that helps them in their jobs.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Learners and apprentices feel very welcomed and cared for because of the inclusive culture leaders and staff have created. Staff identify learners' and apprentices' needs promptly and accurately. They use appropriate strategies, such as personalised support plans and wellbeing facilities, so that learners and apprentices overcome the barriers to learning they face. Leaders accurately identify the need to improve how they identify the needs of the small proportion of adult learners studying online courses.

Leaders and staff monitor learners' and apprentices' progress well. When unexpected life events occur, staff make reasonable adjustments for learners and apprentices so they can continue to learn. Staff consider the effectiveness of support they provide, including for care-experienced learners, and adapt their strategies accordingly.

Leaders provide staff with appropriate training so they can give learners and apprentices the help they need and adjust the support strategies they use. Coaches receive training that helps them provide and adjust their support for visually impaired learners and those with autism.

Staff make sure that other settings learners attend, such as work experience placements, are appropriate. They share relevant information with these settings and help learners to advocate for themselves. This enables learners who are disadvantaged to participate in all aspects of their learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have a very clear vision to provide high-quality education and training that prepares learners and apprentices well for their next steps and careers. Leaders are fully committed to serving their communities, including young people who have not achieved GCSE English or mathematics, adults and apprentices learning and training for employment and careers and learners with complex needs preparing for independent living.

Leaders understand the strengths and priorities for improvement of their provision well. The actions they take, driven by a well-considered improvement strategy and equally well-considered teaching strategy, are raising standards of teaching and improving the experiences of learners and apprentices. Governors hold leaders to account effectively because, through their regular visits to lessons and interactions with learners, they understand first hand the quality of learners' experiences.

Leaders and governors make decisions that are in the best interests of learners. They recruit staff for key roles that drive improvement and ensure learners are safe. They make sure learners with high needs have the facilities and resources to access and support their learning.

Leaders value staff highly. They invest in high-quality training so staff can continually improve their teaching and achieve the aims of the teaching strategy. They celebrate the achievements of staff through awards. They enable staff to participate in community activities that are of personal interest to them, such as for menopause awareness. Staff largely enjoy working at the college and feel leaders care for their workload and wellbeing.

2. Education programmes for young people

Expected standard	
Needs attention	 

Expected standard 

Achievement

Expected standard 

Learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make appropriate progress and most achieve their qualifications. They learn new knowledge and

skills that they generally apply well. Learners in uniformed public services use their map-reading knowledge to prepare for expeditions. Catering students perform front of house and kitchen duties for food-themed evenings in the restaurant.

Learners produce work of a standard appropriate for their level of study. In engineering, the standard of learners' work is often high, for example, when they create bespoke light sabres. While learners do not make enough progress in improving their grades in GCSE English or mathematics, they gain the knowledge and skills needed in these subjects to apply them in the vocational courses they study. Motor vehicle learners learn to write clear quotations for customers, and GCSE mathematics learners relate what they learn to personal finance.

With the knowledge and skills they acquire, learners are prepared well for their next steps. Most learners move on to further education, employment or training.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of their curriculums. Their actions to improve the quality of teaching are working effectively in most subjects. Leaders know this is not yet the case in GCSE English and mathematics because teachers do not help learners to close the gaps in their knowledge well enough to improve sufficiently on their previous attainment.

The curriculums are relevant to the needs and aspirations of learners. The sports academies prepare learners for careers in the industry. Healthcare courses are aligned well with employment opportunities.

Expert teachers sequence learning logically so that learners build their knowledge securely. They use teaching strategies effectively so that learners deepen their understanding. Sports learners discuss disasters at sporting fixtures, debating the effectiveness of risk assessments to attribute accountability. Teachers explain concepts and techniques well, usually providing learners with time to practise and hone their knowledge and skills. Engineering learners become skilled users of lathes and milling machines. Beauty therapy learners develop competence in lash lifts and waxing through client treatments. Teachers use assessment well to provide learners with feedback that helps them improve. For example, in sport, teachers give feedback that helps learners to identify different muscle groups and typical injuries correctly, where they previously may not have done this accurately.

Staff provide disadvantaged learners with appropriate support so they achieve their learning outcomes. Staff do not use the targets they set for learners consistently well to help them achieve their full potential.

Teachers integrate meaningful opportunities for learners' wider development skilfully into the curriculum, including purposeful work experience, European sports tours and visits from employers.

Leaders set high expectations for learners' behaviours. Learners are respectful and polite, including to staff and guests. Wearing their uniforms, sports learners are professional and represent the sports academies well.

Learners know the high expectations leaders set for attendance and most attend well, though not in GCSE English and mathematics. A small but significant proportion of learners do not attend well enough because of, for example, mental health challenges and poor transport links for those living in rural locations. Leaders have appropriate strategies in place to improve attendance, but these have yet to yield the full impact they intend.

Leaders provide learners with opportunities beyond their courses to develop their confidence and resilience in social interactions. These include the crochet and knitting clubs, cooking groups and fundraising activities.

Leaders have planned a coherent programme of careers information and guidance. However, this is scheduled too late in the academic year and, as a result, learners are not equipped to make fully informed decisions about their next steps. Learners take part in worthwhile work experience and work-related learning, such as exhibiting their artwork and working in commercial salons and kitchens, which helps them understand the skills they need for work.

3. Adult learning programmes

Expected standard   

Expected standard

Learners develop their knowledge and skills well, relative to their starting points. Learners for whom English is not their first language acquire the language skills to move on to GCSE courses and vocational learning. Learners on access to higher education courses develop their academic skills so they are ready for degree courses in, for example, physiology or nursing. Most learners achieve their qualifications and learning goals.

The standard of work learners produce is appropriate for their level of study. Learners in English structure their sentences accurately, using correct spelling and grammar. Learners in Spanish use vocabulary confidently in conversation.

Adult learners are well prepared for what they want to do next. Those studying online courses acquire new knowledge, which helps them work more effectively with colleagues.

Learners in English improve their language and social skills, which helps them to secure employment and promotions.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders know clearly the strengths and priorities for improvement in adult learning. They make sensible decisions that improve the experiences for learners.

The curriculums leaders provide are aligned well with employment opportunities and help adults develop the social and work skills they need. Courses in plumbing and health train learners for employment. Online courses provide learners with specialist knowledge that helps them in their jobs. Tailored learning for learners for whom English is not their first language equips them with the language skills for social interaction.

Expert teachers sequence learning effectively and teach learners well, using the college's framework for teaching. They use activities skilfully so that learners discuss their ideas and develop their knowledge securely. In psychology, learners discuss the impact of the structure of their research projects on the achievement of assessment criteria. In Spanish, teachers use repetition tasks and revisit learning effectively so that learners remember more. Teachers of learners for whom English is not their first language set homework based on learners' misconceptions that improve the accuracy of their spelling. Teachers use individual support plans effectively to guide learners to achieve their targets and ambitions.

Teachers use assessment effectively to provide learners with useful feedback so they can improve. In online learning, teachers identify elements of legislation that learners need to improve their knowledge of to answer questions fully. Teachers of English correct learners' pronunciation and intonation so they learn how to use interjection phrases in formal and informal conversation politely.

Participation and development

Expected standard 

Staff create a friendly and supportive environment in which learners feel welcome. They set clear expectations for study behaviours that learners understand well. In English classes for learners for whom English is not their first language, teachers make sure learners listen respectfully to one another, helping them to converse appropriately during social interactions. Learners typically have high rates of attendance. When they miss lessons, staff help them to catch up on missed learning.

Learners enjoy the social aspect of college. They value the opportunities staff provide for them to volunteer and fundraise. Learners on access to higher education courses appreciate the help to overcome anxiety that the student support team provides. Staff help learners to develop their social skills and take care of their wellbeing.

Learners know about equality, tolerance and respect and how these relate to their lives. Learners studying English discuss their different cultures, which helps them to challenge assumptions. Learners studying online courses know how social media posts can polarise views.

Learners receive careers information and advice that helps them make informed choices about their next steps. Learners on access to higher education courses receive helpful support from staff to apply to university. Learners on English courses know about the next level of study and opportunities for learning in vocational subjects.

4. Apprenticeships

Expected standard

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Most apprentices achieve their qualifications. In the engineering degree apprenticeship, apprentices often achieve distinction grades. Apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at least in line with their peers.

Apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours, which they apply well at work. Engineering apprentices create technical drawings using computer-aided design software to manufacture commercially viable products. Apprentices produce work that is of a standard appropriate to their level of study.

Apprentices, and particularly those studying higher-level engineering, are well supported by staff to develop the advanced mathematical skills they need for their course.

Apprentices are prepared well by staff for their final assessments. Apprentices with education, health and care plans achieve their personal targets and goals securely. Apprentices acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their jobs.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of apprenticeship training. They monitor apprentices' progress closely, making sure they achieve their personal and professional goals. Leaders continually improve apprenticeship training in response to employers' needs. For example, in response to employers' feedback, education and childcare apprentices begin their training by shadowing colleagues.

Leaders have aligned the curriculum offer closely to the skills needs in the region. Engineering apprenticeships up to degree level prepare apprentices for mechanical, electronic and manufacturing specialisms. Education and childcare apprenticeships provide employers with a pipeline of skilled staff in this hard to recruit sector.

Skilled staff teach and train apprentices well. They plan learning sequentially so that apprentices build their knowledge and skills to work independently and competently. Staff

use questioning skilfully so that apprentices recall prior learning and expand their explanations using appropriately technical language accurately. Staff provide high-quality instruction and allow sufficient time for apprentices to practise their skills using up-to-date technologies, such as design software. They use assessment effectively to provide apprentices with feedback that helps them improve. In engineering, coaches provide precise and insightful advice on apprentices' use of high-powered lasers in ultra-precision machining.

Staff and employers intertwine on- and off-the-job training well, so that apprentices have meaningful opportunities to apply what they have learned at work. Staff provide apprentices with additional mathematics tuition and help those returning to education with study support. In this way, apprentices are supported to participate in their training and achieve their goals.

Participation and development

Expected standard

Staff set high expectations for apprentices' professional behaviours. Apprentices are motivated by and committed to their training. They are respectful, and know the importance of reporting intolerant or bullying behaviours and to challenge stereotypical views and discriminatory attitudes should these occur in training or at work.

Staff provide apprentices with opportunities for personal development that go beyond the curriculum. Apprentices across disciplines share and celebrate their work with employers, other apprentices and the public at apprenticeship exhibition events. Apprentices studying electrical installation take part in skills competitions.

Apprentices develop their understanding of personal development themes through the assignments they complete and their discussions with coaches. They learn about equality, healthy relationships and the importance of resilience in sustaining positive mental health. They discuss challenging topics, such as knife crime and domestic violence with staff, helping them to understand risks and develop their awareness of abuse. Through studying units available to them, apprentices understand topics, such as personal finance.

Apprentices receive appropriate careers advice and guidance, which helps them to make choices about what they want to do next, though most remain with their current employers when they achieve their apprenticeship.

5. Provision for learners with high needs

Expected standard	 
Needs attention	

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Learners with high needs on specially designed courses make appropriate progress from their individual starting points towards their goals and identified outcomes. Learners on vocational courses at levels 2 and 3 achieve their qualifications in line with their peers.

Learners with high needs develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours securely and apply what they have learned well. They participate in work experience, which builds their confidence to interact with others and apply for jobs. Learners produce work at a standard appropriate for their stage of development or level of study. They contribute confidently to group activities and sessions.

Learners with high needs are ready for their next steps to further learning, employment or greater independence. They learn valuable employability skills from their work placements. They develop confidence to travel independently and acquire the personal safety skills they need. Learners move on to positive destinations.

Participation and development

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff create a respectful and tolerant culture that learners with high needs value highly and contribute to well. Learners feel safe, and they know how to raise any concerns they have. They are confident that staff will deal with these quickly. Learners have not experienced bullying or discrimination at college.

Learners on specially designed courses have high rates of attendance. Staff monitor learners' attendance closely and act quickly if they are absent, making sure they are safe. At levels 2 and 3, learners' attendance is similar to that of their peers.

Learners take part in activities that build their confidence, develop their resilience and teach them to advocate for themselves. They run small enterprise activities, such as bake sales, where they interact with staff and learners. They enjoy individualised physical health programmes that help them to create healthy habits. Learners understand themes such as consent and know how these relate to them.

Learners with high needs on specially designed courses receive high-quality careers guidance that helps them in their decisions about what to do next. Coaches and employers help learners make decisions about work. At levels 2 and 3, staff accompany learners in meetings with career professionals so they understand their options.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and improvement priorities in high needs provision. Their improvement actions are well informed and effective. They have

revised learners' curriculums for specialist high-needs courses so they are individualised and well tailored to learners' needs and employment prospects.

On courses specially designed for learners with high needs, teachers order learning effectively, revisiting topics so that learners develop and reinforce their knowledge and skills. They use their expertise to make real-world situations relevant to learners' own experiences and needs. Teachers use strategies effectively so that learners develop their communication skills and ability to self-regulate. Staff make sure there is enough time for learners to practise what they have learned and close any gaps in their knowledge. This is not consistently the case for learners with high needs on vocational courses at levels 2 and 3. Learners with high needs on specially designed courses become more independent because of the activities staff organise, such as when shopping for food and cooking lunches.

On specially designed courses, staff assess learners' progress accurately and frequently, celebrating their successes and identifying new targets to work towards. On vocational courses at levels 2 and 3, staff do not review the progress learners make towards their identified outcomes consistently well. These learners do not know what they need to improve to achieve their outcomes.

Staff work effectively with therapists to make sure the curriculum is accessible to learners. The arrangements they make for learners transitioning out of college are well supported by families and partners, such as the local authority. Learners are prepared well for their next steps.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy the inclusive, welcoming and positive culture of the college. They value the diversity of others openly and feel a sense of belonging.

Learners and apprentices, many of whom have disadvantage and challenges in their lives, benefit well from the education and support the staff at the college provide. Young learners who need extra financial support for travelling to college receive bursaries to help with the cost. The college offers well-designed courses that provide options for the high proportion of learners without grade 4 or higher in GCSE English or mathematics to continue in education. Previously home-educated learners and those not in education and training have opportunities to re-engage with learning. Adults learn the language and skills they need for employment.

Young learners develop a wide range of relevant skills, using industry standard facilities and equipment. Learners in the sports academies train and compete in specialist football and golf centres. They achieve coaching qualifications and practise their leadership skills during work experience. When they finish their course, learners are ready for university study or employment in professional sports.

Adult learners who speak English as an additional language very much enjoy learning at college. When they participate in volunteering activities or enjoy social activities, such as picnics with others, they develop their social skills and build friendships. With their new

language skills, they have the confidence to speak with teachers about how well their children are doing in school.

Apprentices are well motivated to learn and succeed. Those returning to education after a long period of time quickly feel part of their apprenticeship communities and are supported well by staff to manage their learning. Apprentices become highly skilled and competent, making a valuable contribution at work. Engineers learn to measure extremely small distances using electromagnetic waves and they manufacture precision products accurately. Apprentices in early years settings learn their roles quickly through work shadowing of qualified colleagues early in their course so that they can work with young children confidently.

Learners with high needs learn essential skills and behaviours for their next steps. Those on supported internships develop the skills and behaviours they need for their jobs and are often offered employment as a result. Learners on specially designed courses grow in confidence and speak confidently to staff and other students, who may be unfamiliar to them when they fundraise for charity events. Through learning about themes such as alcohol and substance misuse, they know how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Though young learners make progress towards achieving their GCSE English and mathematics qualifications, they do not close the gaps in their knowledge well enough to achieve a grade 4 or higher, often because they do not attend enough lessons.

A small but significant proportion of young learners do not attend vocational lessons well enough. Leaders are working with intensity to improve the attendance of these learners. At the time of inspection, it was too soon to see the full impact of their work.

Though leaders have designed a programme of careers education for young learners, it is scheduled too late in the academic year. Learners are unable to give the full weight of consideration to decisions about their futures.

Though staff set targets for learners with high needs on level 2 and 3 vocational courses based on their education and health care plan outcomes, they do not review these with sufficient frequency, involving all relevant colleagues. This means that they cannot celebrate learners' progress and revise their targets accordingly.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching and assessment in GCSE English and mathematics, so that young learners close the gaps in their knowledge and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders should further improve the attendance of young learners.
- Leaders should make sure that staff set, review and adjust the targets of learners particularly those with high needs on vocational courses at levels 2 and 3, so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders should change the timing of the careers information, advice and guidance young learners receive so they have plenty of time to make well considered decisions about their

next steps.

About this inspection

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

Inspection activities:

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

Newbury College is a general further education college with a single campus in Newbury, Berkshire. At the time of the inspection, 1,214 learners aged 16 to 18 years, 1,569 adult learners, 362 apprentices and 127 learners in receipt of high needs funding were studying at the college.

The college offers a range of vocational courses, including online, and apprenticeships from entry level to level 7. This includes study programmes, including T levels for learners aged 16 to 18 years, adult English courses for learners for whom English is not their first language and degree apprenticeships in engineering. The largest vocational courses for young learners are sports related, and most apprentices train in the engineering and construction sectors.

The college recruits a high proportion of learners who have not achieved a grade 4 or higher in either GCSE English or mathematics.

Principal and Chief Executive: Lee Probert

Lead inspector:

Mark Hillman, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

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Hannah Hancock, Ofsted Inspector

Ben Bastin, Ofsted Inspector

Helen Mills, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

 This data is from 24 March 2026

Number of learners

Total learners

3272

Education programmes for young people

1214

Adult learning programmes

1569

Apprenticeships

362

Provision for learners with high needs

127

Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

Education programmes for young people

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	78	83	Close to average
2022/23	63	81	Below
2021/22	72	81	Close to average

Adult learning programmes

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	85	87	Close to average
2022/23	81	87	Close to average
2021/22	87	86	Close to average

Apprenticeships overall achievement rate

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	58	61	Close to average
2022/23	68	55	Above
2021/22	73	53	Above

Apprenticeships pass rate

Year	This provider	National average
2023/24	100	98
2022/23	100	97
2021/22	100	98

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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

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