Inspection of Runshaw College

Inspection dates: 18 to 21 March 2025

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

Information about this provider

Runshaw College is a medium-sized, general further education college situated in South Ribble and Chorley in Lancashire. Leaders offer courses from entry level to level 5, and apprenticeships from levels 2 to 5. Most of the college's provision is for 16- to 18-year-old students and includes A-level and vocational courses in most subject areas. The largest numbers of students are in science, mathematics, social sciences, business, and law.

At the time of the inspection, there were 4,587 students on education programmes for young people. Most studied at level 3, including 253 T-level students. There were 655 adult students. Most were on courses at levels 2 and 3. Just over one third of adult learners studied English or mathematics. Just over a quarter studied counselling courses. There were 209 apprentices in learning. The vast majority of apprentices studied at levels 2 and 3, with smaller numbers at levels 4 and 5. Just over two thirds of apprentices were on level 2 or level 3 apprenticeships in early years or business administration. The college had 75 students with high needs. Most of these students were integrated across academic and vocational courses from entry level to level 3.

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

Students and apprentices enjoy their education and training. They appreciate that leaders and staff foster a wholly inclusive and welcoming college culture where inclusivity is promoted, and diversity is celebrated.

Students and apprentices feel valued and listened to. Teachers and trainers build friendly and purposeful relationships and encourage students and apprentices to share their ideas and opinions. Students and apprentices appreciate that the feedback that they provide to staff leads to change. For example, leaders now provide a contemplation room and additional seating areas around the campus.

Students and apprentices are proud to contribute positively to the college and wider communities. They assume roles as careers champions, student ambassadors, and volunteers. Students on the T-level design, surveying and planning course contribute food to a homeless shelter. Level 3 business administrator apprentices teach local primary school children about road safety. Students with high needs undertake bag packing in local supermarkets to raise money for charity.

Students and apprentices value the support that they receive from staff who encourage them to aspire and achieve. Teachers and trainers encourage confidence and self-belief. Adults studying access to higher education (HE) courses have the confidence to make career changes and aspire to work in disciplines such as educational psychology. Level 3 business administrator apprentices gain the confidence to lead professional conversations with clients. Students with high needs participate in activities such as Lego therapy with specialist support coaches to increase their social skills. Students and apprentices are confident to hold conversations on challenging topics with professionalism and respect.

Students and apprentices know that they are expected to attend, behave, wear their identification cards, meet deadlines, and apply effort. Leaders and staff establish these standards and set very high expectations. Students' and apprentices' behaviour is exemplary.

Staff monitor students' and apprentices' attendance diligently. In the few instances where attendance falls below college expectations, leaders intervene swiftly to help students and apprentices to catch up on missed learning. Most students and apprentices attend well.

Staff encourage students and apprentices to participate in societies and clubs that enable them to further their passions and discover new ones. They host segments on 'Runshaw Radio' and compete in regional and national competitions as part of the college's eSports academy. Students in the college's debating society question local Members of Parliament and council leaders. This helps students to develop their wider interests and talents.

Students and apprentices feel safe at college and in their places of work. They know that bullying and harassment are not tolerated, and that should they raise a concern staff would take it seriously and take action.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders engage very effectively with a broad range of stakeholders and employers. They understand local and regional skills needs very well and use this information to plan their future provision. They work collaboratively with the local authority, employers, and other stakeholders to support regional recruitment needs. Leaders ensure that students develop transferrable skills that will support them into further or higher education or employment. They have developed their curriculum offer in health and social care, digital and cyber technologies, and civil engineering to meet the needs of the local area. In response to employers' needs, they have designed a bespoke course for overseas nurses and midwives recruited by the Lancashire Teaching Hospital.

Leaders work effectively as a member of The Lancashire Colleges group to plan and coordinate the courses that they offer to meet the needs of their local communities. They ensure that the curriculum enables the large majority of students to progress onto a broad range of higher education courses or degree apprenticeships. This is designed to provide a workforce to meet future local, regional, and national skills priorities.

Leaders work closely with stakeholders in the community. Supported interns work with a local housing association and community residents. They participate in 'skills swopping' where they help older people to use laptops and mobile telephones, and in exchange, learn how to knit and sew. This develops their employability skills in readiness for work.

Leaders ensure that stakeholders contribute to the curriculum design and implementation of their courses. In information technology, employers collaborate with staff to make sure that students are taught the knowledge and skills that they need to prepare them for employment. Students learn code documentation, programming languages used in industry, and robust programming. This prepares them well for working in the digital sector.

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

Leaders have high expectations for what students and apprentices can achieve. They pride themselves on providing comprehensive education and training that enables most students and apprentices to achieve well and move on to higher-level study or employment.

Leaders consider carefully the range of courses and apprenticeships that they offer. They ensure that students and apprentices acquire the knowledge and skills that they need to secure employment in growth industries and to meet regional and national skills gaps. Adults studying functional skills English, many of whom are asylum seekers who aspire to work in the health and social care sector, are taught the specific skills that they need to prepare them successfully for the workplace.

Teachers and trainers sequence courses and apprenticeships judiciously so that students and apprentices have opportunities to practise their knowledge and skills, and to revisit topics to consolidate their learning. In sport, students learn about the skeletal system before exploring the energy system of the human body. This helps them to understand the skeleton's ability to regulate energy expenditure.

Most teachers and trainers are subject experts with related industry experience. They use their expertise well to ensure that students and apprentices acquire substantial new knowledge and skills. In access to HE social science, teachers use their industry expertise in microbiology and criminology to bring contextualised examples into lessons. They illustrate to students how topics are relevant to their future careers.

Most teachers and trainers use teaching strategies adeptly to help students and apprentices to remember their learning. On the T-level design, surveying and planning for construction course, teachers help students to understand key concepts such as building technology and project management and revisit these concepts periodically. This helps students to consolidate their knowledge in lessons and during their extended work placements. Students are prepared well for a final project on modular housing. However, in a few cases, teachers do not plan lesson activities well enough. In these instances, students who finish their tasks early must wait for others to catch up.

Most teachers and trainers make effective use of assessment to check students' and apprentices' understanding and to remedy any misconceptions swiftly. Teachers who teach level 3 sport use probing questions to confirm that students know the methods and protocols of fitness testing. However, in a few instances, teachers do not use assessment well enough to confirm students' understanding.

Most teachers provide helpful feedback to enable students to make further improvements to their work. Teachers' feedback includes strengths, weaknesses, and the next steps that students need to take to improve their work. Teachers provide feedback to students on the A-level modern history course to help them to refine the structure of their writing and use of source analysis. Most students make continued improvements to their work. However, trainers' use of this method is not consistently effective. In a few instances, apprentices do not know what they need to do to make further improvements to their work. In some instances, apprentices continue to make the same errors. This limits their opportunities to achieve distinction grades.

Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that students with high needs achieve their aspirations. They have fostered collaborative partnerships between additional learning support staff and curriculum teachers. Teachers ensure that adaptations for students are implemented systematically. Students have targeted interventions aligned to their education, health, and care plans. Staff arrange for students studying travel and tourism to access online work experience if they are not yet ready, due to anxiety, to participate in a work placement. Staff support students with high needs extremely well.

Most young students, including those with high needs, adults and apprentices achieve their qualifications. However, a few young students are not challenged sufficiently to achieve higher grades relative to their previous qualifications. Most young students move on to further or higher study or employment, including first-choice universities.

Students and apprentices benefit from a carefully considered programme to promote topics such as physical and mental health, respect, tolerance, and democracy. Young students feel empowered to speak up when something is wrong. In addition, leaders provide students and apprentices with a rich and extensive wider curriculum that includes sports academies, trips, and visits. Students and apprentices make excellent use of these opportunities.

Students are supported to arrange high-quality work placements that align with their career aspirations. Leaders provide a scholars programme to support students who wish to apply to Russell Group universities. Apprentices attend careers workshops. Leaders offer students with high needs micro-volunteering opportunities in the college. Students and apprentices are very well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders are aware of the demands involved in teaching and the impact of their high expectations on teachers and support staff. They identify this as a key area for improvement. Leaders have put in place a range of strategies to help teachers to manage their workload. This includes training teachers to make use of artificial intelligence to plan lessons. However, in a few curriculum areas, teachers continue to find their workload difficult to manage.

Governors are proud to serve the college community. They bring a wealth of expertise to their roles from their work in education, finance, and the civil service. Student and staff governors make rich contributions that support the board to understand what it is like to be a student or member of staff at the college. Governors provide high levels of support and challenge to ensure that leaders continue to improve the quality of education and training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Provide clear and accurate feedback to apprentices on what they need to do to improve their knowledge, skills, and behaviours.
- Increase the proportion of students who make substantial progress from their starting points and achieve the highest grades.
- Further strengthen measures to reduce staff's workload.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130741
Address	Langdale Road Leyland Lancashire PR25 3DQ
Contact number	01772 622677
Website	www.runshaw.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Clare Russell
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	7 to 10 March 2022
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, 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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