

Inspection of Luminate Education Group

Inspection dates:

4 to 7 February 2025

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Luminate Education Group is a large group of education providers in Yorkshire which was formed in April 2009. The group comprises three further education colleges, a sixth-form college and two higher education institutions.

Leeds City College operates across 10 campuses in the centre of the city. This is the largest of the three colleges, accounting for around three quarters of all learners and apprentices. At the time of inspection, there were 8,194 learners on education programmes for young people. Health and social care, science and arts subjects make up the largest numbers on vocational courses. In addition, 531 learners were enrolled on T levels, the largest being in health. There were 10,248 adult learners, a third were studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). There were 790 apprentices studying at levels 2 to 7, most of whom were on engineering, business administration and law or health care apprenticeships.

Leeds Sixth Form College is located in the city centre and provides A levels in subjects, such as psychology, chemistry and law. At the time of inspection, there were 563 learners enrolled on A-level courses and 21 on AS-level courses.

There were 796 learners with high needs. Of these, 526 were studying on vocational or academic courses and 270 were on specialist pathways. Learners with complex needs study at The Vine campus in Leeds.

At the Park Lane campus in Leeds, there were 278 learners aged 14 to 16. Learners study core aspects of the national curriculum and vocational courses, such as hairdressing, beauty therapy, construction and travel and tourism.

Keighley College serves a more rural area. At the time of inspection, there were 896 learners on education programmes for young people. Health, construction and engineering make up the largest numbers on vocational courses. There were 38 learners on A-level courses. In addition, 41 learners were enrolled on T levels, the largest of which was early years educator. There were 667 adult learners, most of whom were enrolled on GCSE English and mathematics courses. There were 214 apprentices studying at levels 2 to 4, most of whom were enrolled on engineering and construction apprenticeships.

Harrogate College provides education for learners and apprentices in North Yorkshire. At the time of inspection, there were 562 learners on education programmes for young people. The largest numbers were enrolled in construction, creative arts and health. Ten learners were studying T levels in either early years educator or health. There were 123 adult learners, mostly studying on access to higher education or GCSE English and mathematics courses. There were 143 apprentices studying at levels 2 to 4, most of whom were on engineering and construction apprenticeships.

Leaders work with seven subcontractors.

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

Learners and apprentices are eager to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful in their next steps. Most learners and apprentices grow in confidence, are committed to their learning and know how to study effectively. For example, level 3 business learners at Harrogate develop confidence and high-level skills in public speaking as a result of opportunities to present to external audiences. Apprentices on level 2 healthcare, develop their confidence and resilience through working on different wards in local hospitals.

Learners and apprentices feel accepted for who they are because staff champion and promote equality of opportunity. Learners and apprentices flourish in their learning environments. They are polite and demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and staff, and this creates a positive and collaborative culture.

Learners become active citizens through taking part in fundraising events, volunteering and community projects. For example, adult learners on ESOL courses volunteer at local organisations, such as Oxfam, and level 2 hairdressing learners visit homeless centres to provide free haircuts.

Learners and apprentices have access to extensive enrichment activities and competitions across the college sites. Learners can join a diverse range of clubs, such as the British Railway Society, Friends of the Earth, football, yoga and drag diary. Participation in these clubs is high. Learners have opportunities to travel overseas, including to Denmark, Bali and South Africa. Learners and apprentices benefit from these opportunities and develop and discover their interests and talents.

Most younger learners develop skills and knowledge, which enable them to meet their goals and progress in their chosen field. For example, learners in level 2 beauty therapy at Leeds learn technical skills, such as manicures and pedicures, which prepare them very well for industry requirements. However, too many learners studying A levels at Leeds do not achieve their qualifications, which prevents them from moving on to their planned next steps, such as university.

Learners aged 14 to 16 are focused and motivated to learn. They are inspired by the variety of activities that staff offer. For example, as part of the transition to college learners stay at Herd Farm, where they develop their skills through outdoor activities and challenges. They appreciate that the college is a place where they can express themselves and celebrate who they are.

Most younger learners benefit from opportunities to attend well-planned, relevant work experience. These include work placements, employer-led projects and social action initiatives, which are tailored to industry expectations and challenges. Learners who are not quite ready for independent work placements gain experience through volunteering. This provides meaningful exposure to the world of work.

Learners with high needs successfully develop the knowledge and skills that they need for adulthood and to lead more independent lives. Learners with more complex needs benefit from specialist facilities, including a hydrotherapy pool at The Vine campus, where experienced therapists help learners to maintain flexibility and strength. A few learners at the Keighley and Leeds City campuses access supported internships, which lead to sustained employment.

Adult learners benefit from access to a wide range of courses that meets their learning needs and the needs of local employers and the communities in which they live. They proficiently use the skills they develop to support other learners in lessons by becoming 'super-helpers'. They gain confidence, grow in self-respect and are proud to contribute towards the progress that their peers make.

Apprentices make positive contributions in the workplace, which employers value. Healthcare apprentices confidently conduct observations of patients and know what action to take should there be complications with medical equipment, such as with catheters. Apprentices on level 2 butchery develop customer service skills and can advise customers on different cuts of meat and cooking methods.

Most learners and apprentices attend well. They are punctual and arrive at lessons prepared and ready to learn. Younger learners who are most at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) increase their attendance and commitment to their courses over time. This is as a result of the high focus that staff place on building relationships and resolving conflict. Most learners who are NEET remain in education or progress to positive destinations, such as employment or apprenticeships. However, in a few areas, such as A-level provision in Leeds and GCSE English, attendance is too low, and learners miss valuable learning.

Learners and apprentices access a broad range of careers advice and guidance. This includes information from teachers with high levels of industry knowledge and very experienced careers staff. Learners and apprentices receive appropriate careers advice from the start of their learning, which helps them to select the most appropriate course in line with their career goals. Learners and apprentices are very well informed about their next steps into further learning or employment.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and secure at all campuses and know how to report any concerns. Staff promote a culture where transgressions are dealt with promptly and used as opportunities to educate. Learners are reassured by the presence of security staff and the adherence to wearing lanyards. Learners aged 14 to 16 feel safe because they have trusted adults in the academy who know their needs well.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the skills landscape across West and North Yorkshire. They participate very effectively with a large number of key stakeholders, such as local councils, community groups, education providers and employers. For example, leaders collaborate on a wide range of strategies with West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to meet the priorities of the communities that they serve. These include employability training for adults with low prior attainment and provision aligned to the digital skills agenda, such as in finance and technology.

Leaders are astutely aware of future job opportunities in the region. They work closely with very large national and international businesses to understand their potential training needs. For example, this year Microsoft will open a digital hub in Leeds, and leaders are already working with the company to understand and develop a digital curriculum that will meet its requirements.

Staff have planned effectively a wide-ranging curriculum that contributes to meeting the skills and economic needs in the region. In the health and care sectors, staff have been responsive in implementing pre-employment programmes to help fill short term vacancies within the NHS. In GCSE English, teachers plan and teach the curriculum carefully to support vocational areas, which helps to ensure that learners are well prepared for their intended industries. Teachers use examples of text from digital marketing to help level 3 games design learners develop their use of appropriate technical language.

Leaders have yet to fully engage with stakeholders in all curriculum areas. There are many areas of strong practice. For example, staff worked exceptionally well with Great Ormond Street Hospital to design and offer a level 2 apprenticeship to address the national shortage of play workers in the NHS. However, in a few curriculum areas stakeholder engagement is in the early stages of development, such as in motor vehicle and on A-level courses.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training for all learners and apprentices. Throughout the college group, staff have strong shared values, which are aligned carefully to ensure that every learner has a place, no matter what their starting points are.

Leaders and managers are relentless in their commitment to ensure that learners who are most at risk of becoming NEET benefit from high-quality education and training. Leaders work very closely with their managers and subcontractors to provide suitable courses and to take actions and interventions to reduce the number of young people who are NEET or are at risk of becoming NEET. A significant proportion of learners who were at risk last year made positive progress to their chosen next steps.

Across all provision types, leaders and managers have designed and implemented a wide range of courses that meet effectively the needs of learners and apprentices in

Leeds and the wider West and North Yorkshire area. Managers and teachers have developed sensible progression pathways that support successful progress into further education, higher education, apprenticeships or employment.

In education programmes for young people, tutors implement a well-planned curriculum that builds learners' skills in a logical order. Learners develop essential knowledge before moving on to more advanced techniques. In A-level chemistry, teachers recap topics taught at GCSE to ensure that learners have secure knowledge of topics, such as electron configuration before they introduce more complex gas equations.

Leaders have skilfully designed an ambitious adult learning curriculum based on a clear understanding of the needs of local people and their communities. Managers and teachers expertly plan and teach an ESOL curriculum that responds effectively to the linguistic, personal and social challenges faced by adults arriving in the United Kingdom. The meticulous curriculum design includes not only the development of English skills but also the wider skills that employers value, such as effective teamwork and digital skills. Teachers place a particularly strong focus on promoting a sense of community and shared responsibility.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced in the subjects that they teach. They have strong subject knowledge and industry expertise, including as mechanics, engineers, butchers, scientists and in healthcare. Teachers benefit from a wide range of helpful training to improve their teaching skills. Advanced practitioners provide good support for teachers who need to develop their teaching craft further. New teachers benefit from training and support from experienced staff, which helps them to understand the expectations of teaching at Luminate.

Teachers mostly use their expertise well to plan and teach the curriculum. Learners and apprentices, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), practise, apply and consolidate new knowledge and skills. In practical subjects such as motor vehicle and beauty therapy, and in hairdressing at a subcontractor, teachers give learners clear and precise technical briefings and use demonstrations to model and explain concepts clearly and concisely. As a result, most learners make good progress in mastering and applying technical skills.

Teachers of adult learners use a very wide range of varied and creative approaches to make learning effective and more enjoyable for learners. For example, ESOL teachers set up competitions where learners work in small groups using plastic letters to create simple sentences using physical and emotional adjectives. Teachers on the level 2 teaching assistant course introduce learners to Maslow's hierarchy of needs by encouraging them to consider what they would prioritise if they were shipwrecked and how this relates to meeting the needs of children at their workplaces.

Teachers use questioning skilfully to assess and extend learners' knowledge and understanding. In access to higher education science, teachers deftly probe learners' understanding of statistical reliability and validity in theory sessions. Consequently,

learners make valuable connections to learning in other modules, such as the reliability and validity of experiments in chemistry.

Most teachers on provision for learners with high needs use well-planned teaching methods. For example, in foundation learning at Leeds, staff teach learners English by helping them to follow recipes to make smoothies and then to evaluate what they think of the taste. In a few instances, teachers rely on worksheets that are not age-appropriate. In a few lessons, teachers do not give learners with high needs enough time to fully participate in or respond to activities.

Most teachers use assessment well to ensure that learners and apprentices understand what they have done well and what they need to improve. Teachers provide precise verbal feedback to help learners and apprentices improve their practical work. Learners and apprentices respond to feedback well, and the quality of their work improves over time. However, in a few instances, teachers' feedback on young learners' written work is too superficial. For example, feedback provided to learners aged 14 to 16 does not consistently lead to useful improvement targets and, in a few instances, teachers do not address gaps in learning.

Teachers support apprentices well to prepare for their final assessment, using mock assessments, practice presentations and professional discussions. They successfully monitor the progress of apprentices from their starting points through supportive progress reviews. Employers understand the progress that their apprentices are making and support them to gain more experiences in the workplace.

Teachers adapt their teaching strategies effectively to meet the needs of learners who have high needs or SEND. For example, teachers of learners with high needs aged 14 to 16 tailor resources well, such as by offering structured tables in science and providing verbal reinforcement in mathematics. As a result, learners with high needs or SEND achieve as well as their peers.

Most learners and apprentices produce work which is of a good standard. A high proportion achieve their qualifications and develop new skills and knowledge, preparing them well for further and higher education and career progression.

Leaders and managers have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of their provision. When courses fall below leaders' high expectations, leaders swiftly implement rapid improvement plans, which has led to improvements in most of the areas that previously were not performing well. However, A-level provision at Leeds Sixth Form College has not yet improved following intervention.

Leaders and managers have effective arrangements in place to monitor and manage the performance of subcontracted provision. Subcontractors participate well with quality assurance and safeguarding activities, which enables leaders at Luminate to identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

Leaders place a sharp focus on developing a culture of autonomy and inclusivity for staff across the college. Heads of department have complete responsibility for the

areas that they manage. This approach helps them to develop their own leadership skills as they take full ownership of financial, curricula and staff performance.

Staff value highly the support that leaders and managers provide regarding their workload and well-being. Leaders have a range of forums and services that staff can access for support and information. Most staff feel supported, and when they do encounter increases in their workload, such as demanding assessment periods, they are treated in fair and equitable ways by their managers.

Leaders have recruited knowledgeable and experienced governors who bring valuable expertise, including from education, local government and finance. Leaders ensure that governors receive very detailed reports, which help governors to understand the group's strengths and key areas for improvement. Governors are linked to individual curriculum areas and support services and visit the college frequently to meet with staff, learners and apprentices. This helps them to appreciate the day-to-day challenges that staff face. Governors are exceptionally well informed. They challenge leaders and managers very well, holding them to account for the quality of education and training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that learners with high needs benefit from learning activities that are well planned and age-appropriate.
- Identify and take actions to increase the proportion of learners who achieve their A-level qualifications.
- Consistently provide useful feedback for young learners that helps them understand how to improve.
- Take action to increase attendance in subjects where it is too low, particularly in A levels and in GCSE English and mathematics.

Provider details

Unique reference number	135771
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Website	www.leedscitycollege.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Colin Booth
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 April 2022
Main subcontractors	Motive8 Bradford Limited Westrow Limited Paul Shakeshaft (Yazz) Potato Lane Projects Limited Norton Webb Limited Blue Apple Training Limited NEUPC Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director, quality of education, 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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