

Inspection of Woking College

Inspection dates:

4 to 7 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Education programmes for young people	Outstanding
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Woking College is a 16 to 19 academy based in Surrey and has one main campus for full-time and part-time adult students. Adult students also study at the local Maybury Community Centre. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,400 full-time students. Of these, 484 students were studying purely A levels, 250 were studying vocational courses and approximately 560 were studying a mixed programme of A levels and vocational courses. At level 3, courses include A levels and BTEC. The college offers level 2 provision for approximately 100 students which includes GCSE re-takes in English and mathematics, alongside a range of vocational qualifications such as business, health and social care, creative media and information technology. The college offers adult provision predominantly in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry level to level 2. There are 50 students in receipt of high-needs funding and 26 students with an education, health and care plan. There are four students who are children looked after and 57 young carers.

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

All students are highly positive about their learning. Staff motivate them extremely well which ensures most students develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be ready for their next steps. The vast majority of A-level students make excellent progress and many earn places at highly competitive universities. Adult learners quickly develop new skills which help them at work and in their personal lives. Students rightly speak highly of the excellent support they receive from subject and pastoral staff which helps them to stay on track and in most cases to make rapid progress.

Students behave and attend well. Leaders, managers and college staff model exemplary professional behaviours and ways of working. As a result, students are courteous and highly respectful of one another and staff.

Students feel safe when in the college and at the Maybury Community Centre. They know how to report concerns should they have them. They appreciate the welcoming, safe and supportive environment that leaders, managers and staff create. Staff and students do not tolerate bullying, harassment and abuse and, as a result, instances of these are very rare.

Students thrive in the inclusive, respectful and very positive environment in which they learn. Students enjoy learning about the different cultures at the college and build very positive relationships with peers. Students in the LGBTQ+ community settle into college quickly, feel comfortable being themselves and speak enthusiastically about the positive culture staff and students create. Students' and adults' understanding and embodiment of British values are exemplary.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities rightly feel highly supported by staff. Parents of students with high needs speak very positively about the support that their children receive which enables them to flourish while at college. Children looked after and young carers are monitored very well by knowledgeable staff who work very effectively with external agencies to provide bespoke care and support so that they achieve well.

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

Leaders recognise the relatively high levels of deprivation in the local area. They ensure they are ambitious for all students by providing a challenging curriculum which meets their needs and interests successfully. Students rightly speak very positively about the very high quality of teaching and support they receive from their teachers that ensures they make rapid progress.

Leaders have developed effective partnerships with the local authority that helps them to understand the educational needs of the local community. For example, leaders, managers and staff are rightly proud of the high-quality ESOL courses which successfully improve the life chances of adults in the community. Together,

they identified the increased number of refugees in the community and skilfully designed a foundation course to help these students develop their skills and confidence. As a result, most quickly progress onto the ESOL programme.

Managers and teachers plan and order the content of students' learning effectively. For example, new A-level sociology students, many of whom have never studied the subject before, learn initially about sociological concepts and the theory of sociological research. They then learn to apply this knowledge by studying education, a topic familiar to them from their schooling. A-Level English language students develop their grammar skills first. This ensures they develop mastery and fluency which builds their confidence well as they progress to more challenging topics.

Teachers use assessment very effectively and frequently to check students' understanding. Teachers then adapt their teaching carefully and successfully to revisit topics that students have not fully understood. A-level biology teachers implement valuable short discussions in lessons for students to consider new points raised and explore any misunderstandings. This supports students to speak fluently about their learning and develop a stronger understanding of topics. Teachers review ESOL students' written English statements quickly and provide feedback so they are clear on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Students repeat these tasks and apply the feedback with confidence which helps them to develop the quality of their written and spoken English.

Well-qualified teachers with strong subject knowledge help students understand new information quickly. Students respond positively to teachers' creative activities in lessons which aid their comprehension of complex concepts and theories. For example, A-level law teachers share their wealth of professional experience skilfully which helps students to apply their new knowledge to real-life scenarios. They provide challenging topics for students to discuss and create scenarios that model the kinds of decisions solicitors make while taking into account case law.

Leaders ensure teachers and support staff continually improve their teaching skills through well-planned, inspiring training opportunities. Teachers speak enthusiastically about a culture where staff willingly support each other to improve their classroom practice. For example, sociology teachers use classroom strategies learned from science teachers which help them to devise effective revision strategies for their students. Teachers value their membership of a local college consortium where they can share teaching skills with teachers from other colleges. For example, geography teachers share resources which help develop their skills and confidence in teaching their subjects. Staff teaching ESOL have recently completed training in handling traumatic experiences which helps them to support Syrian refugees confidently and effectively.

Students, including those with high needs, quickly develop substantial new knowledge and skills. They remember complex concepts and understand speedily how to apply theoretical knowledge practically. Students produce high-quality written and practical work and use technical and professional language fluently. For

example, drama students learn about the use of physicality in ensemble work from a production by 'Frantic Assembly' theatre company and use these ideas successfully in their practical work. A-level media students produce creative and professional work that reflects the skills they need to gain work or a university place. Level 2 business students use appropriate technical language very well and are able to articulate prior learning and how it relates to current learning on the importance of social media policies.

Leaders and managers understand their strengths and weaknesses very well. They have created effective systems which help them to maintain the outstanding quality of education. They focus sensibly on the areas which will have the greatest impact by working swiftly and sensitively with staff.

Leaders, managers and teachers ensure students benefit from a broad personal development programme which helps students develop their wider skills and supports their progression. Most students participate in the 'Woking Way' where students are well supported to learn about their next steps including university, apprenticeships and employment. For example, students speak very positively about the 'excellence programme' where they learn from alumni students and attend valuable webinars from universities which inspire prospective medical students about specific areas of interest. As a result, most students are clear on their next steps and what they need to do to be successful. While most students participate in high-quality work experience, leaders recognise that a small proportion of the level 2 students do not currently benefit. They do complete useful sessions on developing their employability skills.

Staff feel proud to work at the college. They are exceptionally positive about the culture leaders have created. They describe leaders as visible, approachable and highly focused on staff's well-being. Leaders celebrate achievement frequently in staff forums which helps staff to feel recognised, highly valued and a member of the Woking College family. Staff support newly appointed colleagues very well so that they quickly and enthusiastically settle in.

Leaders benefit from strong oversight from experienced trustees. Trustees share their expertise in business and finance which helps leaders to plan their curriculum and resources effectively. Trustees understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college clearly. They use this information effectively to challenge leaders to bring about improvements in the quality of education for students. For example, trustees recognise the growing apprenticeship opportunities locally and regionally so ensure leaders provide students with information about these opportunities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure safeguarding staff have the appropriate training and knowledge to carry out their roles successfully. Leaders ensure all staff receive frequent training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders have created clear and sensible policies

to ensure all staff and students are safe and know how to report any concerns. Leaders and managers use sophisticated methods to record and monitor any safeguarding incidents clearly and work well with external agencies when necessary. Leaders and managers recruit staff safely. Leaders ensure staff are well trained to support the small number of learners with medical conditions.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145007
Address	Rydens Way Woking Surrey GU22 9DL
Contact number	01483761036
Website	www.woking.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Brett Freeman
Provider type	16 to 19 Academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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

Daniel Beale, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Andy Fitt	His Majesty's Inspector
Kate Hill	His Majesty's Inspector
Ally Bell	Ofsted Inspector
Joyce Deere	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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