



Self Assessment Report

2022 - 2023

Section 1:

Background and Context

Halesowen College is one of three post-16 Further Education Colleges in Dudley; it is the only tertiary college. Dudley College of Technology is a General Further Education (GFE) college, 6 miles away, and King Edward VI College is a sixth form college, 5 miles away. There is further local competition from school sixth forms, most notably Invictus and Windsor Academy Trust.

Halesowen College is a medium sized tertiary college currently operating from three sites close to the centre of Halesowen. The largest campus at Whittingham Road consists of thirteen blocks, most of which have been constructed since 1982 and all of the oldest blocks have now been refurbished and fully modernised to facilitate the delivery of a modern and relevant curriculum.

We are currently engaged in an ambitious estates strategy which will see our second largest building Shenstone House redeveloped in 2024 to house a Health and Social Care Centre of Excellence linked to T Level delivery.

Our Coombs Wood site currently houses apprenticeship provision, alongside some digital and media provision. This will be repurposed in 2024 for our Hair and Beauty provision when Digital Technologies and Media will move to a newly refurbished campus at Trinity Point.

The Social Mobility Commission Index report (2019) states that whilst the West Midlands has no Social Mobility 'hotspots' the performance of West Midlands conurbations is quite poor outside of the central city with much of the Black Country doing worse than the average local area.

As a local authority Dudley North ranged **507** out of **533** authorities in the Social Mobility Index (2018) and Dudley South range **314**. In terms of indices of multiple deprivation, the Black Country has severe pockets of deprivation in each local authority and Halesowen draws significant numbers of students from Dudley and Sandwell which is statistically the most deprived local area (ranked 12th in the country).

The College provides education to over 4500 learners. It primarily serves the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell, but also, more widely West Birmingham. Over 95% of learners at the College study on full time courses with the vast majority being 16-18. Approximately 21% learners follow A level programmes, with 44% of learners on Level 3 programmes. Learners with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) have increased in the past 4 years with an increased number of students who qualify for high needs funding in 2022-23.

Curriculum at Halesowen College is informed by our employers alongside several contextual factors and evidence bases, including the Black Country Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) report and the Black Country Local Industrial Strategy. In conjunction with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) priorities and recent priority areas highlighted in the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) the College plans a curriculum that will offer the best opportunities for employment in technical and higher technical employment. In addition, the College takes a broad view of the academic curriculum drawing on national and local LMI to drive a curriculum that provides progression into high quality higher education and secure employment.

The Corporation recognised that, as a body entrusted with both public and to some extent private funds, it has a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance at all times. In carrying out its responsibilities, it conducts its business in accordance with the principles identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership); and with 'The Code of Good Governance for English Colleges'. Following reclassification to the public sector in November 2022 the College adheres to Managing Public Money.

The recent publication of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (May 2023) has highlighted the following:

'Challenges for the West Midlands and Warwickshire include:

- *Relatively low skilled population compared to the national average.*
- *Relatively low graduate retention.*
- *A significant decline in apprenticeship starts and achievements since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK.*
- *A relatively high proportion of non and limited internet users.*
- *Employers struggling to access digital skills.*

Opportunities for the West Midlands and Warwickshire include:

- *Regional flexibility in skills provision as a result of the WMCA Trailblazer deeper devolution deal (for the WMCA area).*
- *A world class automotive cluster transitioning to production of low emission vehicles.*
- *The advancement of the country's fastest growing technology sector.*
- *Facilitating emerging strengths in clean technology and green energy.*
- *Stimulating levels of growth in 'Priority Growth Clusters' identified by the WMCA.'*

The LSIP has three key priorities. *Priority 1* has the aim to ensure post-16 provision across the West Midlands region meets the ongoing needs of employers across the key sectors. The key sectors to support the growth of the region are:

- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Construction
- ICT and Digital
- Logistics and Distribution

There is also the recognition of the importance of the Health and Social Care sector, the Creative Industries, and the Professional Services sector to the West Midlands economy.

In addition, importance should be placed on providing sector specific and cross-cutting responses to the skills development in the core themes of:

- Transition to Net Zero
- Digital Skills
- Leadership and Management

Priority 2 is to facilitate business growth in West Midlands through the provision of excellent, flexible leadership and management training in general and specific topics according to business need.

This priority can be achieved by:

1. An increase of the fundamental leadership and management capabilities within West Midlands businesses through the provision of flexible, modular, stackable training and business support for current and future leaders and managers.
2. To provide specific leadership and management training opportunities in areas such as supporting with digitisation, advancement of new technologies and the transition to Net Zero.
3. To ensure that any provision is mapped effectively and promoted via collaborative engagement amongst FE providers.

Priority 3 is to respond to employer requests for greater levels of essential skills for work and workplace digital skills. Key actions to achieve this include:

1. To increase the levels of employability skills in people entering the workplace through the provision of consistent, trackable 'Essential Skills' programme drawing on the best practice from recognised schemes such as 'Skills Builder'.
2. To review essential skills for work provision and trial new methods to increase effectiveness including, for example, including structured essential skills for work support in work experience placements to contribute to converting classroom knowledge into workplace skills.
3. To increase the levels of digital skills for the workplace across the workforce in all sectors of the West Midlands economy through the provision of short course, modular upskilling and longer programmes according to individual need.
4. Review of existing good practice and consideration of a new digital skills programme for delivery by FE providers for employees to upskill, across the region ensuring consistent, comparable and reliable provision, trusted by employers.

Skills information from the Department for Work and Pensions/West Midlands Combined Authority Place Based Plan (May 2023) indicates:

In Birmingham:

- There is the highest claimant count rate of any local authority in England.
- Youth unemployment rates in Birmingham are higher than the regional average (partly due to a large number of students) of the Black Country.
- Over a quarter of the city's working age population are economically inactive – this is higher than the regional average.

Gaps in provision highlighted are:

- Management and professional: more law needed.
- Construction: gas engineers, surveyors and trades.
- Health: nursing and dentistry in particular.
- Engineering and Manufacturing: more needed to fill vacancies.
- Logistics: more needed to fill vacancies.
- Digital: more software development specifics needed.
- Hospitality: more professional cookery needed.
- Admin and Customer Services: sufficient provision but high vacancies.

In Dudley:

- There is a lower claimant count than the West Midlands regional average.
- Youth unemployment rates are higher than the regional average.
- Nearly 1 in 5 of Dudley's working age population are economically inactive.

Gaps in provision highlighted are:

- Health: Nursing, Dentistry and Allied Professionals.
- Management and Professional: more Finance and Accounting needed.
- Construction: Carpenters and fork-lift operators.
- Engineering and Manufacturing: more needed to fill vacancies.
- Logistics: van drivers, vehicle manufacturers and LGC drivers.
- Digital: more software development specifics needed.
- Hospitality: Chefs and cookery professionals.
- Admin and Customer Service: more provision needed to fill high vacancies.

In Sandwell:

- The claimant count is higher than the West Midlands regional average.
- There is one of the highest youth claimant counts in the West Midlands region.
- Nearly one third of the working age population are economically inactive – this is the highest rate of anywhere in the West Midlands region.

Gaps in provision highlighted are:

- Management and Professional: for Sandwell, software roles form part of management and professional - more digital coding needed. Also, more marketing and business management to meet demand for Business Development roles.

- Construction: surveyors and trades.
- Health: nursing, allied professionals and higher-level upskilling qualifications.
- Engineering and Manufacturing: more broader offer in engineering and manufacturing at entry level and up to meet specific vacancies.
- Logistics:
- Digital: more software development specifics needed.
- Hospitality: opportunity to upskill front of house hospitality staff.

These 'gaps' align with the 'Transformational Sectors' identified in the WMCA Local Skills Report (2022):

- Automotive and Advanced Manufacturing
- Business Professional and Finances Services
- Construction
- Low Carbon and Environmental Technologies
- Digital and Creative
- Life Sciences and Social Care
- Logistics and Transport Technologies

The future success of the college will be determined by the extent to which the college meets the needs of stakeholders in the region and addresses the skills priorities outlined above.

The Corporation recognised that, as a body entrusted with both public and private funds, it has a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance at all times. In carrying out its responsibilities, it conducts its business in accordance with the principles identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership); and with 'The Code of Good Governance for English Colleges'.

Section 2

Our Intent

At Halesowen College we believe that further education can be life changing and transformative. In partnership with our students, employers and the local community, we can raise our shared productivity, prosperity and aspirations.

A Level Intent

The A Level programme intends to prepare students to be confident and productive and ambitious; to give them the knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to progress to and succeed in higher education and to be successful in their careers.

The A Level curriculum goes beyond the learning of subject specific content. It provides wider skills development, such as confidence, articulacy, research skills and knowledge of a wide range of career options to increase aspiration against the socially disadvantaged background of some of our students.

There are two routes within our A Level student programmes:

- Route A: 3 'traditional' A Level subjects
- Route B: a combined programme of A Levels and Applied Generals

The aims of the A Level study programme are:

- To provide a highly ambitious and impactful curriculum and academic programme of study which inspires students to achieve their very best.
- To ensure the provision of a high quality inclusive programme, offering a broad range of relevant A Level subjects.
- To support students to progress onto higher education and into fulfilling and ambitious careers.
- To ensure a strong focus on adding value, equipping students with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to progress onto the best universities.
- To provide students with a wide range of experiences which will inspire and build cultural capital.

Vocational and Technical Programme Intent

The College delivers a range of applied generals and technical programmes from Level 1 to 3 in the following sectors:

- Animal Management
- Art & Design
- Beauty & Hairdressing
- Business
- Catering
- Digital Technologies
- Early Years and Education
- Foundation

- Health and Social Care
- Media
- Performing Arts
- Public Services
- Science
- Sport
- Travel & Tourism

The College is currently introducing a range of T Levels, starting in 2021 with:

- Education and Early Years
- Health

Then in 2022-23 we brought on stream:

- Accounts and Finance and
- IT and Digital, building new curriculum in well established areas.

The intent of the Vocational/Technical curriculum is to:

- Provide students with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to become productive citizens.
- Deliver a highly ambitious and vocationally relevant curriculum, aligned with the local, regional and national priorities and in collaboration with employers to ensure learners have the most relevant and up to date knowledge and skills.
- Support students' personal development and employability, to enable them to develop in confidence and resilience through wider curriculum experiences.
- Deliver a career focussed curriculum underpinned by a focus on positive destinations and supporting progression for all students.
- Ensure all students gain Maths and English skills they need for successful progression to their next steps and to continuously improve literacy, numeracy and Digital Skills.

Adult Curriculum Intent

The adult curriculum starts at Entry Level for ESOL and Level 1 and 2 with a clear focus on ensuring adults develop basic skills in English, Maths and Digital Skills. This reflects the context in the Black Country where the proportion of residents with qualifications at Level 2 and above, is below the regional and national averages. In terms of vocational/technical qualifications the adult offer is focussed around, health, digital, business and finance which is reflective of WMCA and the LSIP priority areas.

The two largest areas of provision within adult provision are Counselling which offers provision from Level 2 to 5 and offers excellent progression to fully qualified BACP accredited status and Access to Higher Education. The Access to Higher Education offers seven different diplomas in:

- Land-based
- Social Sciences
- Science
- Health Professionals
- Midwifery

- Nursing
- Business & Law

The intent of the Adult Curriculum is to:

- Provide adults with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to become productive members of society.
- Deliver a highly ambitious and challenging curriculum, aligned with local and regional and national priorities and in collaboration with employers to ensure adult learners are equipped with the most relevant knowledge and skills.
- Ensure adult learners have the basic skills and qualifications they need to progress successfully to their next steps.
- To support adult learners to progress onto higher education and then onto exciting and ambitious careers.

Apprenticeship Curriculum Intent

Apprenticeship provision at the College reflects local and national priorities identified by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Local Skills improvement Plan (LSIP).

The College offers the following standards:

- Accounting Levels 2, 3, and 4
- Business Administration – Level 3
- Digital Marketing – Level 3
- IT – Level 3
- Healthcare Science – Level 2 and 4
- Customer Service – Level 2 and 3

The intent of the Apprenticeship curriculum is to:

- Provide apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to become productive citizens and contribute positively to the economy.
- To deliver a highly ambitious and challenging curriculum, aligned with local, regional and national priorities and in collaboration with employers to ensure apprentices are equipped with the most relevant knowledge and skills.
- Support apprentices' wider personal development to become confident, resilient and independent.
- To ensure all apprentices develop Maths, English and Digital Skills necessary to secure sustainable employment.

Executive Summary

The College offer and intent is broad covering provision for 16-18 students, adult students, high needs students, apprenticeships and higher education.

Provision Type	Number of Students (2022-23)
Programmes for young people	4038
Adults	1636
Apprenticeships	175
High Needs	139
Higher Education	265

The breadth of range of provision ensures that students have access to a wide range of programmes with strategically developed progression routes to higher education in partnership with University of Worcester and direct delivery through Pearson. Employers are becoming increasingly involved with the design and development of the curriculum.

The culture of the College is inclusive and ambitious for staff and students. The College is committed to the health and wellbeing of students and staff and has adopted the AOC charter for Mental Health and Wellbeing. Over 100 staff have now been trained to be Mental Health First Aiders recognising the need for high levels of support.

Governors, leaders, managers, staff, students and employers are aware of the college's commitment to safeguarding and all staff are aware of their responsibilities to safeguard students. Staff are appropriately trained and actively engage in external agency meetings and forums to ensure that information is shared and knowledge is current. Referrals are effective and timely and managed through formal channels and multi-agency working and students say they feel safe and know who to ask for help and support.

Our recent "Leaders in Safeguarding" audit highlighted the following strengths in safeguarding:

There are well established and clear lines of accountability for safeguarding children and adults at risk in all areas of college activity. This includes firm arrangements to ensure effective levels of independence in decision-making when managing safeguarding concerns. Staff at all levels have a thorough understanding of their role to safeguard learners at the College. The College Safeguarding Team is very well organised and highly effective. Strong, productive partnerships have been established with all statutory safeguarding partners and the wider safeguarding community in the West Midlands region. The Safeguarding Team is led by the DSL and there are 7 DDSLs who take responsibility to lead on key themes across the College. All members of the Safeguarding Team have clear job descriptions for their various specialist roles.

The safeguarding arrangements at Halesowen College are supported very effectively by leaders and managers, who ensure the protection and welfare of learners are at the forefront of everything the College does.

The Safeguarding Team members are powerful advocates of the College's positive and transparent culture. They are passionate about the work they do and proud of their many achievements. During the audit it became clear that the Safeguarding Team is made up of dedicated staff who are encouraged to develop expertise in the areas they lead. For example, with domestic violence, Prevent, learner conduct, sexual harassment, mental health, homelessness, support for care experienced learners and substance misuse.

The standards of safeguarding practice are so high that HE institutions place student social workers at College to gain experience in safeguarding as part of their degree course.

Performance for the vast majority of provision at the College has been self-assessed as good, with most delivery areas reporting good achievement rates and good progression in addition to strengths recognised in the wider framework. Apprenticeships are improving and the college is confident that the revised structure and offer will show a clearer positive impact and continue on the journey of improvement.

Students progress well at the College and develop positive behaviours and attitudes to prepare for employment and/or further study. Students feel safe and like the independent and inclusive environment offered at the college and they participate in many forums including representation at the college corporation, the Environmental group, Equality and Diversity and the Ambassadors Programme.

Students are supported by a highly experienced Student Services team, providing additional and extensive support outside of the classroom with the increasing need to support students with mental health issues. In 2022-23 the College had 94 Looked After Children and 248 students are in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – students are supported in small groups and one-to-one ensuring that independent learning is maximised, and specialist and individualised support is provided.

The College has self-assessed the following judgements:

Overall Effectiveness	Good
Quality of Education	Good
Behaviour and Attitudes	Good
Personal Development	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Provision Types:	
Education Programme for Young People	Good
Adult Learning Programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires Improvement
Provision for Learners with High Needs	Good

Overall Effectiveness

This is judged to be Good because:

- All students benefit from an ambitious curriculum which is logically sequenced and focuses on the required knowledge, skills and behaviours which are relevant to local and regional employment needs.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Study programmes are well designed and purposeful and allow students to develop academic skills and vocationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours and effectively incorporate skills competitions and work related activity to enhance the student experience and provide outstanding destinations (95% positive destinations for young people).
- Students develop industry ready knowledge and skills and understand the needs of industry due to a curriculum with a clear intent shaped by employer collaboration.
- Teachers use their specialist industrial and technical knowledge to enhance the learning experience.
- Skills to reinforce learning in a relevant vocational context and this allows students to develop high standards of technical skills.
- There is a strong commitment to offer a 'wider' curriculum – students in areas such as Public Services have the opportunity to contribute to their community with litter picks and the Remembrance Parade, Hair and Beauty students work with refugees, homeless and the unemployed, all of which develops confidence, resilience and teamwork.
- Excellent engagement with external stakeholders such as the former LEP and Skills Accelerator Projects and the Chamber of Commerce enables the strategic aims to remain both current and relevant, leading to over £2 m in capital bids won in partnership with local stakeholders.
- Governors challenge the senior leadership team frequently through the highly effective Governance framework and this ensures that education standards, curriculum relevance and student success is prioritised.
- Employer boards and Business Breakfasts are building strong and positive partnerships with key stakeholders and enable positive contributions to community prosperity.
- Quality assurance and quality improvement are very effective in tracking and monitoring in year progress. This enables leaders, managers and governors to have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of provision and make good use of the views of students, staff, employers, unions and other stakeholders to shape strategy. Quality improvement is meticulously managed via a clear quality cycle involving termly performance reviews and an under notice of improvement programme.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective, students receive a safeguarding curriculum through the Personal Development programme delivered in tutorial and as

a result feel more informed on how to keep themselves safe.

- Students show high levels of respect to one another and their teachers, behaviour in lessons and around the college is very good.
- Students engage well in their learning; they are enthusiastic, determined and motivated.
- Excellent personal support helps students to progress towards their learning goals. Students consistently say they value the support from staff and relationships are positive and respectful.

Areas for Development

- Not enough young people achieve their Maths and English qualifications. Despite Functional Skills results improvement, they are still too low, for 16-18 Level 1 they have improved by 10.1% points to 48.4%.
- Not enough young people were retained in 2022-23, thereby impacting on the number of students achieving their qualifications – retention increased from 89.7% 2021/22 to 90.2% in 2022/23 for classroom based and by 6 percentage points for apprenticeships.
- The preparation for examination based and vocational externally assessed programmes needs further development (particularly in Level 2/Level 3 vocational subjects), so that all students feel confident to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and achieve their qualification.
- Teachers and support workers do not always plan effectively together to ensure learners targets are differentiated and learning activities are sufficiently broken down to ensure all students meet their full potential mainly in English and Maths . Addressing this will ensure that all high needs students achieve as well as their peers.
- Despite a small improvement in students' attendance in 2022-23, as a result of a comprehensive programme of interventions further improvement in some areas is required, particularly resit English and Maths.
- Further challenge is needed to encourage all learners to achieve or exceed their target grades at Level 3.
- Apprenticeship provision requires improvement.

Quality of Education

This is judged to be Good because:

- The typical quality of teaching, learning and assessment at Halesowen College is good, with a number of outstanding programmes such as Level 3 Acting, Level 2 and 3 Catering (Professional Cookery), Level 3 Musical Theatre.
- The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. This results in students being well prepared for their next steps and high positive destinations.
- The majority of employers provide a good range of learning opportunities that help apprentices to develop good technical skills and understanding of industry practices.
- The vast majority of students receive good feedback and support that informs them of their progress and what they need to do to improve on their course to achieve.
- Leaders and teachers are ambitious for all their learners, including those with SEND and those who have high needs, and this is evidenced by the curriculum. Where necessary, the curriculum remains ambitious but is tailored to meet individual needs.
- Where leaders identify areas for development, the quality of education is improved through effective planning and support.
- The vast majority of teachers use their industrial and technical experience and skills well to reinforce and enrich learning in the relevant vocational context and students develop high standards of practical and technical skills.
- Teachers and trainers develop well sequenced learning programmes which are taught in a logical way so that content is scaffolded and built on appropriately, so students strengthen and broaden knowledge over time.
- Students benefit from an extensive range of specialist support (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Speech and Language Therapy, Mental Health support, support for those with Autism, signers for hearing impaired students) and teachers work effectively with these support staff to ensure these students make the required progress.
- Preparation for adulthood and employment is effectively embedded into the learning for all SEND students resulting in greater confidence and independence and preparation for progression.
- Employers inform curriculum development through a range of interactions with the curriculum and apprenticeship teams; coupled with the use of EMSI and frequent interaction with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance is strong and differentiated for different groups of students to ensure they make the right choice to meet their future career aspirations.
- The student experience is enriched by a developing range of activities such as competitions, live projects and enrichment activities.

- Apprenticeship trainers and assessors have extensive and up to date vocational experience, as a result, a majority of apprentices go on to develop good levels of skills and the vast majority pass EPA first time.

Areas for Development

- Not enough young people make the expected progress and therefore achieve their Maths and English qualifications. Despite functional skills results improvement, they are still too low, for 16-18 Level 1 they have improved 10 percentage points to 48.4%.
- Not enough young people were retained in 2022-23, thereby impacting on the number of students achieving their qualifications – retention increased from 89.7% in 2021-22 to 90.2% in 2022-23.
- The preparation for examination based and vocational externally assessed programmes needs further development (particularly in some Level 2/Level 3 vocational programmes), so that all students feel confident to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and achieve their qualification. This will involve effective use of starting points to adapt and set challenging targets.
- Support for some of the most vulnerable learners such as children who are looked after has not ensured that they have been retained to achieve their programme – the achievement gap is too wide (6.25 percentage points).
- Further develop the apprenticeship curriculum in terms of sequencing and delivery

Behaviour and Attitudes

This is judged to be Good because:

- Leaders and staff have created an environment which is safe for all members of the college community.
- Students and apprentices show high levels of respect to one another and their teachers; behaviour in lessons and around the College is good. Students are very supportive of one another, value each other's contributions and are confident to offer answers.
- Students develop their professional attitudes well: in particular, student on vocational courses are well presented and understand the importance of uniform, appearance and a professional approach for work placement and work related learning.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and conduct and expect high standards of work and these are applied consistently and fairly.
- Staff care deeply about their students and excellent personal support helps students to progress towards their learning goals. Students consistently say they value the support from staff and relationships are positive and respectful.
- Harmful attitudes, particularly those around sexual harassment, have been challenged and a broad range of initiatives around this area took place during the academic year. These included regular discussion of sexual harassment at safeguarding meetings and conducting consultations with students on their experiences of sexual harassment.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion are key principles at the College and this has been recognised by the Leaders in Diversity accreditation which was re-accredited in 2023. Students report they feel safe and the rare incidences of bullying and harassment are dealt with swiftly.
- The College is committed to developing students' confidence through participation in skills competitions such as 'Capture the Flag' ethical hacking event, Chef of the Year, trade tests at Ragley Hall Spa and live briefs with employers from Art and Design and the Hippodrome Project.

Areas for Development

- Despite a small improvement in students' attendance in 2022-23, some areas require further improvement.
- Further promote opportunities for students to undertake youth social action projects.

Personal Development

This is judged to be Good because:

- The College places importance on the value of the wider curriculum offer which helps students to engage with the community through volunteering, work with local projects and competitions.
- Careers advisers provide highly effective, impartial advice and guidance on careers and course options to prospective and current students and this was endorsed by the Matrix Gold standard in 2022. The report stated:

'Halesowen College provides extensive careers support based on students' needs and is delivered by a specialist team within the college. All careers staff are qualified to at least Level 6. An extensive range of evidence has been provided to demonstrate how students have access to timely careers guidance that is tailored to their needs. This has been backed up in discussions with students'.

There is also strong support for those progressing to HE through Uniconnect and Aim Higher and the many universities who come in to advise students on personal statements and student finance and participate in HE fairs.

- Exceptional wellbeing support and a significant commitment to provide students with effective counselling as mental health concerns continue to increase as we come out of the pandemic. Students highlight that without this support they would not have been able to complete their studies.
- Very effective student feedback and engagement mechanisms are in place that enable students to contribute via surveys, faculty reviews and focus groups. Student ambassadors input into safeguarding, the Equality and Diversity committee and at Local Board level.
- Students have a wide range of opportunities to engage with understanding the range of diversities and interests of the student population. For example, students celebrate diversities with Pride events of the LGBTQ+ community and in 2022-23 students of dual heritage took part in a 'Leaders Unlocked' project to enable West Midlands colleges to better understand the experience of dual heritage learners. Other events included Black History Month events, International Women's Day and Cultural Awareness Day. As a result, students demonstrate respect for each other that celebrates students' diversities and interests.
- A comprehensive safeguarding curriculum delivered in tutorial and in lessons enables students to know how to keep physically and mentally healthy, which includes a strong focus on healthy relationships, drug and alcohol awareness, mental health, 'Time to Talk' and strategies to improve it, gangs and exploitation, radicalisation, peer on peer abuse, hate crime and celebrating diversity.
- Teachers and support staff work effectively with students to give them opportunities to work with industry specialists. Placement Officers and designated staff work with teachers and employers to create work experience and work-related activity relevant to the skills they have learnt and apply in real life workplace opportunities. As a result the majority of students on Level 2 and 3 study programmes complete meaningful work experience or work related activity that develops both strong employability as well as vocational skills. In addition to the wide range of local

employers providing work placements and live briefs, the College has a commercial restaurant @B63 which provides real world learning experience for catering and hospitality students and salons which provide experience for Hair and Beauty students. 30 students have undertaken work placements through the Erasmus Scheme in a range of places such as Fuerteventura (Early Years and Sport), Trento (Business), Munich (IT) and Boulogne Sur Mer (Access).

Areas for Development

- More needs to be done in Vocational Science and Public Services and A Level to ensure there are consistently strong work experience and work-related opportunities.
- In a small minority of areas careers advice for adults on part time evening classes and distance learning programmes is under-developed.

Leadership and Management

This is judged to be Good because:

- There is a well-devised curriculum offer in place with all programmes of learning clearly articulating the intended purpose of programmes, with sequenced planning that provides a curriculum that is fit for purpose for students' next steps in their locality or further learning. This has resulted in strong destinations and progression of students.
- Strategic planning is very effective with good progress made against current strategic goals and clear line of sight to a new strategic plan and an agenda for positive change.
- Excellent engagement with external stakeholders such as the LEP and Skills Accelerator projects, enables the strategic aims to remain both current and relevant, leading to over £2m in capital bids won in partnership with local stakeholders.
- A highly effective relationship with UCU and NEU, our two main recognised trade unions, ensures senior leaders are fully aware of the perceptions of staff leading to informed decision making and improved morale.
- A carefully constructed professional development programme ensures that staff are supported and encouraged to improve their pedagogical skills and subject pedagogy so they are equipped to deliver high quality learning experiences for all students.
- Where leaders identify areas for development, the quality of education is improved through effective strategic planning and rapid improvement plans, for example, improving teaching and management of apprenticeships with staffing changes, improving results on Level 2 OCR digital courses by focussing on exam pedagogy.
- Quality assurance is very effective with excellent tracking and monitoring of in-year progress. Leaders, managers and governors consequently have a clear, accurate understanding of the quality of provision and make good use of views of students, staff, employers, unions and other stakeholders to shape strategy.
- Governors challenge the senior leadership team frequently through the highly effective governance framework and this ensures that education standards, curriculum relevance and student success is prioritised.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all students benefit from a secure and safe environment at each site with a strong culture of vigilance in place. Students are confident to report concerns and state concerns raised are dealt with swiftly and with sensitivity.
- Students and apprentices have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through the Personal Development Programme (PDP) in tutorial covering subjects such as consent, peer on peer abuse, drugs and alcohol and hate crime, they have a safe place to explore and better understand potential threats and risks to their wellbeing.

- Students work safely in practical classes and know how to behave safely in potentially dangerous environments e.g. laboratories and kitchens.

The College makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs across the local and wider region through very effective partnerships with key stakeholders such as employers, civic bodies, community groups, students and parents. Leaders and managers value collaboration and recognise that partnership working can increase impact in the community and improve social mobility for students. Strategic decisions have been taken in relation to the skills priorities the College is best able to contribute to and resources and capacity have been effectively targeted in a fast moving and difficult environment. Examples of this include a pilot subcontracting arrangement with CPC to enable delivery of warehousing qualifications and work alongside Dudley College on T Level placements and work with Dudley Groups of Hospitals NHS Trust. The College has also been successful in working with other local colleges to lead on the LSIF projects linked with digital technologies. A very recent development is linked to work with ICCA on finance and rail developments.

Individual areas embed additional qualifications in the curriculum such as dermatitis prevention for Hair and Beauty to ensure our students are work ready from day one; this gives employers trust in our student's abilities and students the confidence to apply and interview successfully for positions. Other examples include Cabin Crew and ESB qualifications for Tourism students and Food Hygiene qualifications in Catering. In Early Years learners are scheduled to study paediatric first aid in their second year .

Areas for Development

- In a minority of areas not all teachers' industry knowledge and skills are highly relevant and up to date and the employer contribution in the curriculum need to be embedded.
- Further support is needed for teachers who deliver exam based qualifications to ensure positive outcomes.
- Too many apprentices leave their apprenticeship before completion.
- Further challenge is needed to ensure staff challenge and support all learners to achieve or exceed their target grades at Level 3.

Education Programmes for Young People

This is judged to be Good because:

- Teachers have high expectations for students and the standard of work they produce. They systematically check understanding about key topics using a range of approaches, allowing them time to embed their learning through practice, repetition, review and recall.
- Well designed and purposeful student programmes are highly effective in developing strong vocational and academic skills and build well on students starting points and where relevant incorporate competitions and real world projects which enhance the student experience and provide excellent progression and positive destinations.
- Students show high levels of respect for one another and to their teachers; behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Students are supportive of one another and value the contributions of others.
- Students benefit from high quality work experience and/or work-related learning and live briefs. Students develop good skills to prepare them for work as well as good personal, social and work-related skills.
- Students develop good professional attitudes; in particular vocational students understand the importance of uniform, appearance and a professional approach in placement.
- Students have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in college and outside. They benefit from positive staff role models adopting safe working practices in practical classes reflecting safe industry practices.
- Teachers successfully improve students' awareness of the skills that they will need for employment in their vocational subject area. Teachers relate these skills to the assessment criteria of course so that students know what is expected of them and in doing so they draw on a range of personal and professional skills and experiences that they communicate to students.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully, making good use of information about students starting points to ensure that activities are suitably challenging and interesting. Courses are well structured and activities link clearly to assessment objectives.
- A good range of work-related activities support most student's vocational programmes and develops their employability and work-ready skills well.
- Support for students is good with well-used support services that help students to achieve and progress. Specialist teams and dedicated College based wellbeing teams protect and promote students' emotional wellbeing, students speak passionately about staff who 'go the extra mile' and the impact these teams had on their confidence and their ability to successfully complete their courses.
- Students benefit from good quality impartial careers guidance from highly trained staff who help them make clear and well-informed choices about their next steps with the College meeting fully national Matrix standards.

Areas for Development

- Not enough young people make the expected progress and therefore achieve their Maths and English qualifications.
- Not enough young people were retained in 2022-23, thereby impacting on the number of students achieving their qualifications. Retention did, however, slightly improve from 89.7% in 2021-22 to 90.2% in 2022-23.
- Further challenge is required to ensure learners achieve and exceed their target grades at Level 3 and this will involve the effective use of initial assessment.

Adult Learning Programmes

This is judged to be Good because:

- The adult curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure a range of flexible learning opportunities are provided to meet the needs of adults and the local skills needs. Several local community centres are used to offer access to courses for students not ready or able to attend the main college sites. The curriculum is responsive and agile and supports progression into employment, promotion and access to higher education 82% of adults on substantive qualifications have achieved a positive destination.
- A significant majority of teaching and assessment is good for adult learners across all provisions.
- Student feedback is good, adult learners clearly value and enjoy their time at college and are ambitious to achieve.
- Community learning centres serve the needs of local neighbourhoods well.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance is strong with staff successfully identifying the programmes that students need to follow to ensure they reach their intended destination. Adult students integrated within study programmes access the same breadth of curriculum as those aged 16-18. For those on other courses, such as Access to HE there are support sessions from careers for UCAS applications and comprehensive guidance offered by teaching staff. All of which ensure students can progress positively.

Areas for Development

- In a small minority of areas, mainly adults on some part time programmes and distance learning, careers guidance is under developed.
- Achievement rates on adult functional skills and E3 ESOL courses are too low.

Apprenticeships

This is judged to be requiring improvement with good features because:

- Employers are actively engaged in the shaping and design of the apprenticeship programmes through effective partnership arrangements with local employers to recruit to their apprenticeship vacancies and develop their workforce in LSIP priority areas such as Healthcare Science, Business, Finance and Digital Skills.
- There is good preparation and support for apprentices with the vast majority passing their EPA on the first attempt.
- The vast majority of employers provide a good range of learning opportunities that help apprentices to develop good technical skills and a better understanding of industry practices over 90% of apprentices in 2022-23 gained sustained employment and/or promotion.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of how to stay safe at work. Trainers/assessors rigorously check apprentices' safe working practices and check that apprentices feel safe and able to report any concerns. Apprentices understand the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Trainers and assessor are well-qualified and have up to date vocational experience.
- Employers indicate high levels of satisfaction with the skills delivered to apprentices and progress reviews indicate increasing confidence and competence. Employers reflect that apprentices make a positive contribution to the workforce and bring new ideas and skills to the established workforce.

Areas for Development

- A period of deliberate consolidation is now at an end and numbers of apprentices in the key priority areas should be increasing.
- Despite an improvement in the achievement rate in 2022-23 from 51% to 56%, retention for apprentices is still too low and thereby impacts the number of students successfully achieving their apprenticeship qualification.
- Further develop the sequencing and curriculum delivery on apprenticeships
- Improve challenge to learners to encourage achievement of higher than Pass grades in EPA.
- Further develop careers advice and IAG on apprenticeships.

High Needs

This is judged to be good because:

- The reputation of Halesowen College is good – considered highly by local authorities and other professionals and places are sought after, for students with high needs in the local communities 368 consultations were received in 2022-23 for all students with an EHCP.
- Significant numbers of students successfully completed and achieved programmes alongside their peers and the overall achievement rate for the main aim is less than 2 percentage points below those without high needs.
- A highly effective framework for the delivery of teaching and support ensures a consistent approach to meeting a quality standard and expectations of provision for students, including those with global learning delay and complex needs. This informs the intent structure and levels of programmes.
- Staff commitment to applying the structure of the RARPA steps to all life skills programmes is effective, providing an individualised approach to the delivery of teaching as evidenced in each students' baseline assessment, internal and external verification processes.
- There are strong and effective relationships with outside agencies including Speech and Language Therapy and Autism outreach providing a holistic approach to each student.
- Parents and carers are well supported and informed through regular communications from Foundation and Learning Support Staff.
- Many students benefit from positive work experience and voluntary work to prepare them for progression to a supported internship.
- Leaders, managers and teachers provide a safe learning experience and environments for students with complex needs, supported by a safeguarding curriculum which is adapted to suit learner needs, whilst also being mindful to remain age appropriate.
- The quality of additional learning support is good for supported interns and students develop a good range of skills for independent adulthood. As such a number of students remain in their work placement or progress into paid work.
- Several high needs students are fully integrated into programmes in mainstream areas and receive good support from staff to achieve.
- High needs students receive good information, advice and guidance, through a range of events, when deciding which course best meets their needs and future goals.

Areas for Development

- Teachers and support workers do not always plan effectively together to ensure learners targets are differentiated and learning activities are sufficiently broken down to ensure learners meet their full potential in English and Maths.

- Further develop links with a wider range of employers to provide opportunities for high needs students to interact with employers and to assess the skills they need to progress. There are already some good examples with the Black Country Museum and Audi.
- Further develop careers guidance for all learners with high needs.