

# Inspection of Bilborough College

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 November 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Bilborough College is a sixth-form college situated on the outskirts of Nottingham. In November 2019, the college converted to a 16 to 19 academy and joined the Better Futures Multi-Academy Trust. The college offers full-time education courses for young people.

Leaders offer a very wide range of A levels and level 3 vocational courses. A large proportion of students choose to study a full A-level programme, with a minority of students taking a mixed programme of A levels and vocational courses.

At the time of inspection, there were 2,057 students, all of whom were aged 16 to 18 years.

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

Leaders foster a nurturing and aspirational culture in which students from many different backgrounds flourish together. Students benefit from a vibrant, purposeful environment and the diverse and positive culture.

Teachers and students work together harmoniously. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and they treat students as adults. Teachers expect students to be self-motivated and autonomous in their learning. Students behave accordingly, demonstrating a very professional and mature manner. Students are enthusiastic and curious, with exceptional attitudes to their learning. They are extremely proud to be Bilborough students and enjoy their learning immensely.

Most students successfully gain the required knowledge and skills to progress to positive destinations. Over one third of those who progress to higher education secure places at top universities. Students describe the college as 'a bridge between school and university'.

Leaders work closely with higher education partners and employers. They make positive use of these relationships to provide an extensive range of progression and work-related activities. These include acting workshops with drama schools and visits to local universities to gain insight into careers such as journalism. Students complete the college's 'STRETCH' passport and develop vital skills such as problem-solving, resilience, and digital literacy.

Students benefit from the strong culture of mutual respect and tolerance. They feel safe in the calm and welcoming environment. They know how to report any concerns.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all students to fulfil their potential. They are passionate about their vision for students to 'be who you are, become who you want to be.' Leaders ensure the curriculum meets students' diverse interests and goals, including university, apprenticeships, or employment. For example, they now offer Esports in response to sector growth.

Leaders and teachers carefully select curriculum content to prepare students for their next educational or employment stages. A-level English literature focuses closely on critical theories, so students gain a strong foundation for university study. A-level chemistry includes important transferable skills, such as problem-solving and mathematical techniques, that will help students in future work roles. Creative media leaders work with external partners, such as the British Film Academy, to ensure that vocational topics are relevant and well aligned to industry standards.

The quality of teaching and assessment is consistently good across most A-level and vocational courses.

Teachers plan and order the curriculum very thoroughly. Consequently, students build their knowledge and skills successfully over time. For example, vocational applied science students learn first about simple tasks, such as wave basics, before they move on to more complex tasks, such as inverse square law.

Teachers skilfully help students acquire a sound understanding of new and difficult topics. Psychology teachers use videos and real-life examples to help students grasp biological approaches such as synaptic transmission. Mathematics teachers use pre-reading and independent tasks well, so students actively prepare for new learning in their next classes. Vocational sports teachers explain and promote technical language clearly, such as definitions of tidal volume and hypertrophy.

Most teachers set demanding work, which students complete to a high standard. For example, vocational creative media students produce high-quality story boards with correct use of industry terminology. However, in a small number of cases, such as vocational sport and A-level business, teachers do not always challenge students sufficiently. Students' depth of understanding varies in these subjects.

Most teachers use assessment effectively to check what students know, and to help them become more accomplished over time. Chemistry teachers use card games to check carefully what students remember about previous topics such as recrystallisation. Mathematics teachers provide useful resources, such as exemplar video solutions, to help students revisit what they know about factorisation. Vocational applied science teachers build in good assessment practice of use of correct units and symbols.

However, a few teachers do not always do enough to check students' understanding of difficult topics. Consequently, these teachers are not always able to address specific knowledge gaps in future teaching classes. In areas such as A-level business and vocational sport, teachers' feedback can, at times, be superficial. As a result, students do not progress as swiftly as they could.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are appropriately supported. There is a dedicated hub in which students can access specialist additional support. In classes, teachers ensure they deploy suitable strategies, such as the use of laptops and extra time. As a result, students with SEND make as much progress as their peers.

Leaders monitor attendance closely. As such, attendance is high and has improved year on year. Teachers seek to understand any barriers to attendance and take swift actions to bring about improvement.

The actions of leaders and teachers have successfully improved retention. As a result, most students now achieve well. Many achieve high grades in their chosen A-level or vocational subjects.

Most students develop their knowledge and skills to a good standard. A-level English literature students express intelligent insights into characters and events. A-level psychology students have a firm grasp of key topics such as behaviour theories and how children learn. Vocational performing arts students demonstrate a high standard of skills in areas such as voice projection and choreography.

Students participate in a wide variety of activities in addition to their normal studies. For example, they engage in study groups and skills competitions such as Olympiads in mathematics, chemistry, and biology. Performing arts students participate in college productions, the gold arts award, and undertake the Trinity grade 8 acting qualification.

Leaders provide a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, known as the 'Bilborough Xtra'. Students undertake volunteering and contribute to community projects such as local clothing banks. Student equality ambassadors work with leaders to drive inclusion across the college, including the introduction of halal sandwiches in the cafeteria and the better promotion of gender-neutral toilets. Students know about the importance of physical health and can access the college gym and sessions such as street dance workshops. Teachers support students to complete resilience action plans to improve their well-being. Students gain relevant life skills, including how to cook nutritious meals, and they build their understanding of interest rates and savings.

Most students intend to go on to study at university or via a degree apprenticeship. Skills and progression teachers support students to research these progression routes. For example, they help students to understand different types of courses, the availability of financial support, and how to prepare UCAS statements. As a result, students feel well informed about their progression plans.

A small number of students aspire to progress to employment at the end of their studies. Students undertake employer encounters such as workplace visits or work experience. Leaders and teachers provide plentiful additional guidance about how to prepare for entry to the job market. For example, they provide information and support about CV building and mock interviews. However, students are not always clear about the support available.

Leaders have a good oversight of the quality of provision. They know well their key strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders scrutinise progress made to improve college-wide priorities, such as retention and high grades. Leaders use quality assurance activities, such as 'climate walks' and 'subject showcases', effectively. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of teaching and learning across the college. They ensure appropriate support for the small number of underperforming subject areas.

Governors have highly relevant experience and backgrounds. They have a firm grasp of the college's strengths and areas for development. Governors visit the college frequently to support quality assurance processes such as the 'subject showcases'. They provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge to the senior leadership team.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that all teachers set students demanding work that builds depth of knowledge, skills, and understanding.
- Ensure that all teachers use assessment effectively to check understanding, so future teaching helps students become more accomplished.
- Review and further strengthen the guidance available for students who aspire to progress to employment at the end of their studies.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147285
<b>Address</b>	College Way Nottingham NG8 4DQ
<b>Contact number</b>	0115 851 5000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bilborough.ac.uk">www.bilborough.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	David Shaw
<b>Provider type</b>	16 to 19 academy
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 and 30 January 2020
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	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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Alison Loxton	Ofsted Inspector
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