

Yeovil College

Address: Mudford Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 4DR

Unique reference number (URN): 130805

Inspection report: 20 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- **Not met:** The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

1. Inclusion, leadership and governance, and contribution to

meeting skills needs

Strong standard



Strong standard ●

Contribution to meeting skills needs

Strong standard ●

Leaders engage widely and consistently with employers and other stakeholders across curriculum areas. This is part of longstanding work that leaders undertake to provide them with a thorough knowledge of the local and regional economy. They use this knowledge to respond highly effectively to meet skills needs in key industries, such as defence manufacturing, engineering and aerospace.

Leaders work highly effectively with stakeholders to design and adjust subject area curriculums. Staff consult frequently with employers to check that they teach topics in the most effective order, including the latest topics and purchase relevant equipment, such as modern patient care equipment for T-level health learners. Industry experts visit courses to carry out specialist training. This meticulously planned approach enables learners and apprentices to develop high levels of knowledge and expertise that prepare them very well for their work roles and work placements.

Leaders are pivotal in developing partnerships across the region, through skills and employer groups that they organise. This approach is highly effective in supporting the college's mission to support the local and regional economy. Actions include supporting the development of young professionals' networking skills and developing high-quality supported internships for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Staff across the college create a highly welcoming culture, where all learners feel included, regardless of their backgrounds or needs. Learners, including those facing barriers, are well supported and enjoy college life.

Before learners and apprentices join the college, staff check thoroughly a broad range of barriers that they may face. These include special educational needs and/or disabilities, wellbeing, medical needs and other personal circumstances.

Staff, including the qualified special educational needs coordinator, know their learners and apprentices well. They provide a range of consistently high-quality support that meets needs. Staff at all levels frequently review the needs of learners and adapt support to ensure that learning for those who face barriers meets their needs. Staff encourage learners to take part in as much of the college offer as they are able, including external work placements for which suitable adaptations are made.

Staff are trained effectively in the graduated approach. They are committed to helping learners and apprentices reduce the barriers to learning that they face and become more

independent.

Leaders closely monitor and review the support needed and take effective action to, for example, improve the attendance of learners who face barriers. They make appropriate adaptations to the strategy as needed.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders and governors focus relentlessly on improvement. Their detailed knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of the provision, including that of subcontractors, enables them to produce rapid, sustained changes for the benefit of learners. Governors are highly skilled in supporting leaders. They worked effectively with leaders to remedy the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Leaders and governors have significantly improved their oversight of the quality of the curriculum and of the quality of education for learners with high needs.

Leaders have worked with governors and stakeholders to develop a clear vision that shapes their strategy and the day-to-day actions of all staff. Staff are committed to a high-performing, inclusive college and the aspirational values that underpin how they behave. Leaders ensure that staff feel valued. They provide staff with opportunities to discuss their performance and to raise concerns relating to workload and wellbeing.

Leaders have created a culture of continuous improvement in which they welcome external expertise and support managers and staff at all levels to improve learners' experience. Through sharply focused targets, based on secure analysis of data, teaching observations and scrutiny of learners' work, leaders have made sustained improvements in the quality of education. For example, many more apprentices on the motor vehicle course now achieve their qualification.

Leaders rightly place professional learning and improving the craft of teaching at the heart of their work. They provide teachers, including those who are new to the profession, with a range of high-quality training opportunities that are responsive to the areas for improvement they have identified.

2. Education programmes for young people

Strong standard	 
Expected standard	

Strong standard ●

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have an accurate and well-informed understanding of the quality of the curriculums they offer to young learners. They ensure that provision meets the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes. Leaders provide a consistently high-quality curriculum that is ambitious, inclusive and underpinned by expert teaching. They make well-judged decisions about curriculum design, sequencing and delivery, ensuring provision is closely tailored to course requirements, local context and learners' starting points. Staff ensure that the curriculums they teach build coherently, enabling learners to develop strong subject knowledge, practical competence and professional behaviours.

Teachers skilfully teach complex concepts by connecting new learning to prior knowledge. They use effective strategies, such as modelling, scaffolding and carefully selected activities that meet both subject and learner needs. Staff frequently review and update the curriculum to respond to individual learners' needs and aspirations. Teachers use assessment well to identify precisely the knowledge and skills learners need and to refine teaching approaches. They provide clear, constructive feedback so that learners understand how to improve and close gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders ensure that teachers and trainers have the knowledge, skills and resources to teach effectively and are supported to develop expertise rapidly when required.

Staff expertly use diagnostic assessment, individual learning plans and specialist teams, so that disadvantaged learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other barriers, succeed across the full curriculum.

Staff provide meaningful additional opportunities that extend learning beyond qualification outcomes. These include enterprise projects, employer visits, learner-led coaching, specialist training and work experience.

Participation and development

Strong standard ●

Leaders foster an inclusive and fair culture in which learners feel valued, respected and able to thrive. Learners are confident about who to approach with any concerns and trust staff to respond quickly.

Leaders maintain consistently high expectations of the behaviour, attendance and participation of learners. Staff use well-established attendance monitoring processes to follow up learner absences quickly and thoroughly, resulting in high levels of attendance. They model professional behaviours, challenge lateness appropriately and link expectations to employability. This helps learners to recognise that high attendance, punctuality and participation are important and valued.

Leaders respond effectively to new needs and emerging priorities. For example, they recognised that learners struggled with resilience and self-confidence so they brought in an external company to work with learners and enhanced their tutorial programme in these areas.

Leaders provide learners with a rich, tailored programme of wider opportunities that builds learners' confidence, independence and personal responsibility. This is supported by initiatives, such as YC Edge, that provide learners with additional employability skills such as first-aid qualifications. Staff carefully and systematically embed fundamental British values and respect for protected characteristics through lessons and tutorials, promoting respectful collaboration and inclusive attitudes among learners.

Staff provide learners with a high-quality and well-established careers programme to help them develop clear and informed plans for their next steps. This is complemented by a high-quality and consistently impactful programme of work-related learning that helps learners practise professional behaviours, build transferable skills and gain a secure understanding of workplace expectations.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Learners largely achieve their qualifications well. They make appropriate progress from their starting points, in line with national performance. A minority of learners on A-level courses achieve A*-B grades, and in a few subjects high-grade attainment remains too low.

Learners develop secure knowledge, skills and behaviours that meet the expected standard for their level. Learners studying business, sport, bricklaying, hair and beauty courses respond effectively to feedback to produce theoretical and practical work of a consistently high standard.

Learners make positive progress in English and mathematics. Achievement of GCSE grades 9 to 4 has improved substantially over the last 3 years, and learners are able to apply their skills successfully within vocational contexts.

Learners are well prepared for their next steps towards further study, apprenticeships and employment. They mostly move on to destinations that match their interests and aspirations.

3. Adult learning programmes

Expected standard	  
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Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Achievement is high and has improved substantially in recent years. Almost all adult learners studying qualifications completed their course and passed their final examinations in the previous academic year. Achievement of qualifications in English for speakers of other languages is substantially higher than the national rate.

Learners develop new knowledge and valuable skills that they apply in their workplaces or in further study. For example, in AI Skills Bootcamps, learners develop skills that they apply at work to improve efficiency and reduce overhead costs.

Most learners produce work of a high standard and develop their mathematical, English and digital skills well.

Staff provide learners with a wide range of opportunities to support their understanding, such as guest lecturers and additional support for university applications. Teachers and staff work closely with learners to monitor their readiness for the next stage of their education or employment.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the quality of curriculum, teaching and training well and implement effective strategies to make pertinent improvements. Where retention was previously low, leaders improved the information, advice and guidance that staff provide learners with at the start of their courses. This, along with a dedicated adult support team, has substantially improved retention since its introduction.

Teachers carefully plan well-sequenced lessons that help learners to incrementally build their knowledge and skills. This supports learners' progression to further study and employment. Leaders skilfully plan curriculums, alongside relevant stakeholders, that are well aligned to local skills improvement plans and community priorities, such as improving employees' knowledge of AI.

Staff work collaboratively and effectively to plan the support needs of learners with an identified disadvantage. Teachers sensitively adapt their approaches to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and staff adjust the timetable to accommodate shift patterns of learners. Most teachers take part in an extensive range of in-house and external professional development activities to improve their teaching skills and vocational expertise, such as working with different hair types.

Teachers use their substantial technical knowledge and industry expertise to enrich lessons for adult learners and align topics taught within the workplace. Most teachers use assessment well, utilising a range of low-stakes quizzes and questioning techniques alongside formal assessment to establish gaps in learners' understanding. However, a minority of feedback that learners receive is not sufficiently constructive to enable learners to make sustained progress from their starting points.

Leaders and staff set high expectations for learners' attendance, behaviour and participation in learning. Learners demonstrate professionalism, attend well and participate fully in their studies. On the rare occasion when learners do not attend lessons, staff respond promptly to identify underlying causes and support learners' return to lessons.

Leaders ensure that bullying, discrimination, harassment and victimisation are not tolerated. Learners feel safe and are confident in raising concerns. Staff proactively include learners on courses In English for speakers of other languages in their International Kitchen initiative, where learners share and cook recipes from their home countries alongside young learners studying hospitality and catering. This celebrates diversity and develops learners' social and communication skills and confidence in their spoken English.

Staff teach a curriculum that includes content on mental and physical health, healthy relationships and awareness of radical views and harmful online content. Learners develop a sound understanding of these topics, which helps them to make informed choices about their wellbeing. Staff teaching level 3 beauty prioritise self-care practices alongside professional skills. Activities such as mindfulness, wellbeing walks and yoga enhance learners' resilience, confidence and workplace readiness.

Staff provide learners with coherent careers education and tailored guidance, relevant to their stage of learning.

4. Apprenticeships

Strong standard	
Expected standard	 

Strong standard

Apprentices make extensive progress from their starting points, and almost all pass their final examinations. The most recent achievement rates are high and have risen substantially over the last 3 years. The proportion of apprentices achieving higher grades, where available, has increased significantly and is now high. Apprentices with an identified disadvantage achieve as well as their peers.

Apprentices develop a thorough and secure understanding of new concepts and apply their knowledge, skills and behaviours fluently and automatically. The quality of theoretical and practical work is consistently high. Electrical apprentices demonstrate strong knowledge of

regulations required for safe domestic installations, while welding apprentices confidently apply theory to practice, resulting in high-quality welds.

Apprentices are very well prepared for further training or sustained employment. Employers value highly apprentices' development of new knowledge and skills.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and secure understanding of the quality of the apprenticeship curriculum, teaching and training. They identify and address concerns in a timely and effective manner. Frequent apprentice performance reviews enable managers and curriculum teams to track individual apprentices' progress closely. This includes identifying the reasons when apprentices are still in training beyond planned end dates.

Teachers plan and teach a well-sequenced and logically structured curriculum that enables apprentices to build knowledge, skills and behaviours progressively. Through strong relationships with key employers, particularly in construction and engineering, leaders plan a curriculum that is highly relevant to employment priorities.

Apprentices increase their technical confidence and are useful additions to their workplaces. Carrying out task design in welding and electrical supports the mastery of apprentices' skills, preparing them effectively for their next steps.

Staff provide an inclusive and accessible curriculum. The introduction of an advanced special educational needs and/or disabilities practitioner has strengthened support for apprentices with additional needs, leading to improved participation and attendance.

Knowledgeable tutors are supported well through targeted professional development and high-quality, industry-standard resources. Teaching is typically effective with appropriate use of recall strategies, contextualised industry examples and practical activities. Teachers mostly use assessment effectively to address gaps in learning and provide constructive feedback so that apprentices know how to improve their skills.

Apprenticeship principles are met fully. Strong employer collaboration ensures on- and off-the-job training is well aligned, enabling apprentices to practise and master skills consistently and to a high standard.

Participation and development

Expected standard 

Leaders create a safe, respectful and supportive environment in which apprentices thrive. They prioritise wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged apprentices and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff take thoughtful, proactive steps to reduce barriers, such as contacting in advance apprentices who may be anxious about changes to their timetable to prepare them. Apprentices typically behave appropriately and demonstrate

strong attendance, reflecting the professional standards expected in the sectors in which they work.

Staff act swiftly and appropriately when any concerns arise and do not tolerate bullying, discrimination or derogatory language. Apprentices are confident to raise issues, knowing they will be taken seriously.

Leaders understand apprentices' wider development needs well and provide pertinent opportunities that prepare them well for life and work. The curriculum includes age-appropriate content on mental and physical health, healthy relationships and staying safe from radicalisation, extremism and harmful online content. Weekly themed emails and online materials reinforce this learning, and most apprentices demonstrate a secure understanding of these topics.

Staff provide apprentices with coherent careers education and tailored guidance focused mainly on their current employer and future opportunities to progress. This helps apprentices make informed decisions about their next steps and challenges any misconceptions they may hold.

5. Provision for learners with high needs

Expected standard

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Learners studying specialist high needs courses achieve well. Those on vocational courses achieve in line with their peers. Learners typically make appropriate progress from their starting points. Teachers frequently review learners' progress towards their targets, adjusting or setting new targets for the next term. They support learners effectively to make incremental progress towards the targets in their education, health and care plan. Learners make sustained progress towards their individual goals, and teachers quickly intervene if learners fall behind. Learners develop their English and mathematical skills well.

Learners study at progressively higher levels, such as on progression pathways, which prepares them for supported internships. Those who leave the college move to employment or volunteering. Supported interns who have not yet progressed to employment continue to be supported through links with external agencies, who work with learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities to help them access employment.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced an effective curriculum for learners with high needs. Suitably qualified staff design, plan and teach a well-sequenced curriculum for learners that prepares them for work and greater independence and includes relevant qualifications in, for example, employability skills. Teachers and learning support practitioners provide appropriate support, allowing learners the time they need to think and respond to questions asked or complete tasks. This helps learners to advocate for themselves confidently with strangers.

Teachers use a range of classroom strategies well to help learners understand and remember the new skills and knowledge they are developing. Activities such as individual games and presentation skills secures learners' understanding and prepares them well for their next steps.

Prior to learners joining the college, teachers effectively identify learners starting points. They carefully review learners' education, health and care plans, discuss skills and behaviours with parents and carers and create individual learning plans to help learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their next steps. Teachers provide valuable feedback that helps learners make progress towards their goals.

Leaders work closely with employer partners, charitable organisations and local authorities to offer learners a highly ambitious supported internship programme. Staff have skilfully increased employers' understanding of the benefits of having learners with high needs in the workplace and how to support them. Subsequently, this has increased opportunities for supported interns to progress into paid employment across a diverse range of industries, including logistics and the National Health Service.

Participation and development

Leaders hold high expectations for learners' behaviour, attendance and participation. Learners attend well. A high proportion of learners participate in college activities that further develop their confidence and social skills and support their local communities. These include Duke of Edinburgh Awards, fundraising activities and community forums.

Learners have an appropriate understanding of keeping healthy, including healthy eating and healthy sexual relationships. Teachers plan a curriculum that enables learners to identify healthy food and explain consent. Learners recognise what bullying and harassment are and are confident that staff would act appropriately if they were worried about themselves or a friend.

Learners mostly understand subjects, such as radicalisation, fundamental British values, equality and diversity. However, in a few cases, this understanding is not sufficiently developed to enable learners to understand the risks they may face outside the college.

The careers team work closely with learners from the beginning of their course. Staff provide learners with a range of employer visits and individual careers talks to help them decide what they want to do after college. Learners develop the confidence and resilience that they

need to progress. Staff work closely with parents and carers to support learners in taking their next steps.

What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider

Learners and apprentices enjoy their studies at Yeovil College. They thrive in the highly welcoming and supportive environment that staff expertly create and value the individual approach to their support needs. Staff swiftly assess learners' and apprentices' barriers to learning and provide the help they need to feel safe and secure. Learners and apprentices with special educational need and/or disabilities receive tailored support appropriate to their needs, which helps them to make sustained progress and achieve their qualifications.

Young learners study a curriculum that includes meaningful enrichment, employer engagement, work experience and industry-related projects. These experiences help learners to develop valuable skills, professional behaviours and a clear understanding of progression opportunities. Learners work effectively with each other, demonstrate high levels of confidence and are very well prepared for their next steps in further study or employment. Staff skilfully support young learners to develop their confidence, build on their previous knowledge and skills, and achieve their qualifications. Learners largely achieve well and typically make appropriate progress from their starting points. Learners participate in purposeful activities, such as 'Young Enterprise', community projects and volunteering to develop their teamworking skills and sense of social responsibility.

Adult learners study in professional, respectful and supportive learning environments, where staff prioritise learner wellbeing. Learners collaborate with each other effectively, share ideas constructively and feel valued. The emphasis on wellbeing helps staff to reduce barriers to learning and support learners to develop resilience throughout their studies. Almost all learners complete their courses and achieve their qualifications. They generally develop new knowledge and skills and learn how to apply these to the workplace. For example, learners studying AI Skills Bootcamps learn to automate tasks and improve business efficiency.

Staff work highly effectively with employers to plan and teach apprentices the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to complete their apprenticeships and pass their final examinations. Staff use their substantial expertise very well to link theories taught to the tasks that apprentices carry out at work. Apprentices are highly motivated and committed to improving their skills and broadening the employment options available to them. Apprentices' achievement is high and has increased substantially from previous years. A high number of apprentices achieve merits and distinctions in their final examinations. Apprentices produce work of a consistently high standard and gain confidence to apply their newly acquired skills in their jobs.

Learners with high needs are supported well to study subjects that meet their interests and aspirations. Staff work with parents and carers to enable learners to transition smoothly into college life, ensuring that learners with education, health and care plans receive the support they need to be successful. Learners develop skills to help them gain independence, such as cooking, cleaning and using kitchen appliances. Learners practise work-ready behaviours

in the college's 'learning companies', which include estates, hairdressing and beauty. Learners gain the confidence they need to undertake meaningful work experience linked to their interests, such as estates work in the National Health Service.

Leaders understand learners' and apprentices' wider curriculum needs well. They plan and implement suitable curriculums that teach learners and apprentices relevant topics, such as healthy living, life in modern Britain and the protected characteristics. Learners and apprentices study in high-quality classrooms equipped with cutting-edge technology, inspiring them to learn skills that prepare them well for further study or employment.

Next steps

- Leaders should be more ambitious about the teaching of subjects, such as radicalisation, equality and diversity and healthy sexual relationships to learners with high needs so that learners have a sophisticated understanding of these subjects as they move towards adulthood and employment.
 - Leaders should further improve target setting for learners with high needs so that they are challenging enough to help learners make progress beyond their education, health and care plans.
 - Leaders should continue to take actions to improve the achievement of high grades for young learners on study programmes.
 - Leaders should ensure that all teaching staff provide adult learners and apprentices with constructive feedback that enables learners and apprentices to produce work of a consistently high standard.
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About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with governors, leaders, managers, teachers, support staff and students and apprentices.

Yeovil College is a general further education college with a single campus in Yeovil, Somerset. At the time of the inspection, 1,575 learners aged 16 to 18 years, 795 adult learners, 1,025 apprentices and 167 learners in receipt of high needs funding were studying at the college.

The college offers a range of academic, vocational, higher education courses, and apprenticeships from entry level to level 6. This includes study programmes, including T levels for learners aged 16 to 18 years, Skills Bootcamps for adults and degree apprenticeships. The largest courses for young learners and adults were aligned to the engineering and construction sectors. Almost three quarters of apprentices study courses aligned to these sectors.

At the time of inspection, the college worked with 2 subcontractors, one providing online learning for adults and one providing degree apprenticeships in aerospace engineering.

Principal and CEO: Mark Bolton

Lead inspector:

Sarah Alexander, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Martin Ward, His Majesty's Inspector

Rebecca Jennings, His Majesty's Inspector

Gavin Murray, Ofsted Inspector

Sharon Dowling, His Majesty's Inspector

Karen Morris, Ofsted Inspector

Ben Manning, Ofsted Inspector

Edd Brown, Ofsted Inspector

Amy Bletcher, Ofsted Inspector

Saul Pope, His Majesty's Inspector

Oliver Symons, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 20 January 2026

Number of learners

Total learners

3562

Education programmes for young people

1575

Adult learning programmes

795

Apprenticeships

1025

Provision for learners with high needs

167

Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

Education programmes for young people

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	77	83	Close to average
2022/23	77	81	Close to average
2021/22	75	81	Close to average

Adult learning programmes

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	81	87	Close to average
2022/23	82	87	Close to average
2021/22	81	86	Close to average

Apprenticeships overall achievement rate

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	67	61	Close to average

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	56	55	Close to average
2021/22	60	53	Close to average

Apprenticeships pass rate

Year	This provider	National average
2023/24	98	98
2022/23	97	97
2021/22	99	98

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

Strong standard

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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