

Annex 12

Hereford Ludlow and North Shropshire College – working to meet employers needs



WORKING TO MEET EMPLOYER NEEDS

The College's five-year strategic plan, consulted on and approved in 2021, makes clear the College's responsibility to provide the broadest possible range of educational services in the rural communities we serve. This is particularly important given the sparsely populated demographic, paucity of alternative provision and challenges of local transport. Governors, leaders and managers are committed to ensuring that the business and employer community are central to our planning.

The Strategic Plan includes a number of key commitments. Strategic Commitment 4 states:

We will ensure that the provision fully supports the needs of our students and local economies.

This commitment is divided into four main areas of work. They are:

We will ensure that students have access to the training they need locally by continuing to offer a broad range of vocational and academic training opportunities in each of the areas we serve.

Access to services and transport are key issue for those living rural areas, including the Marches. Prudent financial management ensures that we maintain a wide range of provision across a number of geographically dispersed centres.

A range of course levels are available to ensure students are able to progress locally. Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 courses typically provide access for students who have not yet achieved their key stage 4 thresholds. Level 3 provision is available for those who require a higher level of technical proficiency and/or aspire to higher education. Levels 4&5 are available in some subject areas providing local higher education opportunities.

Timetables are constructed to minimise travel requirements and fully utilise students' time at College. Three full-day attendance patterns also support those who want, or need, to work. This is particularly beneficial for those students who work in industries allied to their main programme of study.

A broad range of apprenticeships are offered across the Marches. The College continues to support apprenticeship delivery in more expensive, capital-intensive areas of work. In some cases, apprentices would not otherwise be able to access this training locally. Additionally, flexible apprenticeship delivery patterns ensure that each sector is able to access training that suits their business needs.

We provide comprehensive support for students with identified learning and/or physical needs. This includes on-programme learning support and a number of

courses specifically designed to educate and progress those with higher levels of need.

We offer land based provision from two separate campuses, Walford College in the north of Shropshire and Holme Lacy College in Herefordshire. Whilst Walford College's farm is predominantly dairy, mirroring the local agricultural economy, Holme Lacy trains students on a mixed arable and livestock farm estate. Additionally, Holme Lacy College's farm, Pound Farm, is the only fully organic further education facility in the UK.

We support specialist niche training that is of national and international importance. Holme Lacy College hosts the National School of Blacksmithing; the largest forging facility in Europe and a centre of national excellence. Holme Lacy College is also one of only three accredited centres in the United Kingdom to deliver training for farriers. HLNSC has developed and maintains provision in forestry, arboriculture and furniture making.

We will develop a curriculum strategy that aligns with the needs of employers in each of the communities we serve.

Examples include:

We determine curriculum intent with employer input, both directly and by using EMSI data to ensure the knowledge, skills and behaviours align with employer need. We deliver both hard and soft skills to ensure students can progress successfully towards employment. Additionally, we encourage employers to directly influence the curriculum by developing opportunities for them to comment and discuss their needs with curriculum delivery teams.

The College delivers apprenticeship provision that is responsive to the needs of individuals and their employers. The use of industry expert assessors to undertake workplace visits ensures that the training is bespoke and contextualised. Additional training is agreed and delivered where a need is identified.

College managers pay close attention to local skills planning, including the work of the LEP's Skills Advisory Panel, Local Skills Improvement Plan and local authorities' economic forums to plan future curriculum developments. The College actively engages with employer representative groups. These include, Hereford and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, Herefordshire Business Board, Shropshire Economic Forum, Herefordshire Skills Board, the Federation of Small Businesses and the National Farmers Union.

HLNSC is responsive to the needs of employers and offers a range of training to meet workplace requirements. The offer, flexible depending on need, includes examples such as; higher-level engineering, welding, forging, agricultural competency qualifications such as chainsaw operator, crop spraying, tractor driving, off-road vehicles or telehandler operator, leadership and management and CIPD. Additionally, the College delivers training for industry accreditation, including; 18th Regulations for Electricians; GasSafe accreditation for heating and gas engineers; MOT and Air-

conditioning for motor mechanics; AAT Accountancy and CIPD for personnel professionals.

Curriculum teams engage with key strategic employers and employer representative groups to discuss training needs and develop provision. For example, by working closely with the Farriery Registration Council and the Worshipful Company of Farriers we ensure that training is industry specific and of a very high standard. The National School of Blacksmithing, based at Holme Lacy College, works with leading industry organisations such as the British Artists Blacksmithing Association to ensure that this unique facility delivers the training needed to the highest standard. Engagement with organisations such as LIC and the NFU ensure that the College's agricultural provision is an exemplar, both for students and for the local agricultural industry.

We will work in partnership with other providers to ensure that our offer aligns with theirs to meet the needs of students and employers.

Examples include:

There are four further education colleges in the City of Hereford. Each College makes a unique and complimentary contribution to Herefordshire's post-16 landscape ensuring that the full range of opportunities are available to young people and adults. Regular meetings ensure that we understand our educational role and helps us plan curriculum that is complementary. We enjoy a strong relationship with Herefordshire's new university, NMITE, to discuss potential areas of collaboration and mutual support.

Regular meetings with schools and membership of bodies such as the Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads ensures that we remain cognisant of their needs and are best placed to support them to achieve their Gatsby benchmarks. The College works alongside secondary school partners across the region to support their students' understanding of post-16 opportunities. Annual events such as Meet your Futures provides school pupils with an opportunity to engage with vocational education before committing to post-16 study.

The College ensures that it remains aligned with other post-16 providers through membership of a number of regional provider partnership networks. These include; SWAOC (Shropshire Wrekin Association of Colleges), MEP (Marches Education Partnership), Herefordshire and Worcestershire Principals Group, MSPN (Marches Skills Provider Network), and Landex (Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence). Additionally, senior managers meet regularly with colleagues from other local colleges to better understand their offer and share ideas. These include our neighbours in Worcestershire and Powys.

The College, along with the Shrewsbury Colleges Group and Telford College is a founder member of the Marches Education Partnership. This partnership promotes a collaborative approach to meeting employer needs. This recently resulted in the successful delivery of two substantial employer-focused projects funded through the DfE's Strategic Development Fund.

The College works with specialist providers to develop provision to meet specific needs. We recently partnered with the Derwen College, Oswestry, to deliver a project designed to provide meaningful work experience opportunities for students with complex needs and those studying Health Care.

Where appropriate, the College partners with other providers to deliver courses required by local employers and to support national needs. Examples include:

- HWGTA (Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association) to deliver HNCs in Engineering to their higher-level apprentices
- Hereford College of Arts to deliver the country's only BA(Hons) in Blacksmithing
- Warwickshire College Group, Myerscough College and the Farriery Registration Council to deliver the apprenticeship standard in Farriery.
- HLNSC is one of only two associate colleges of the University of Worcester. This relationship facilitates delivery of higher education programmes in Hereford.

We will work alongside other stakeholders to improve the socioeconomic landscape by up-skilling the community and increasing productivity.

Examples include:

Membership of Herefordshire Business Board, Chamber of Commerce and other representative groups ensures that the College remains closely linked to local businesses.

The College works closely with the Marches LEP which has supported a number of capital developments, most recently including an award of £1.2m to develop the Low Carbon Technology Training Centre at Holme Lacy College.

The College is fully engaged with Herefordshire and Shropshire local authorities. Engagement with Herefordshire Sustainable Growth Strategy Board resulted in the College's involvement with the development of Herefordshire's 2050 Economic Plan and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Membership of Shropshire's Economic Forum facilitates discussions about how skills can positively contribute to their economic growth plans. As part of this, we are currently working with both Herefordshire and Shropshire to deliver courses through the Government's UKSPF Multiply fund.

CONTRIBUTION TO SKILLS NEEDS – EXTERNAL VIEW

During their inspection in October 2022, Ofsted reviewed the College's contribution to local, regional and national skills needs and reported the following:

Leaders and managers have worked well since the merger to ensure that learners and apprentices benefit from a broad and rich curriculum that closely reflects the skills needs of local, regional and national economies.

Leaders work well with a range of stakeholders. College leaders are well placed and have significant involvement with local enterprise partnerships and local authorities. Leaders work diligently with local NHS trusts. They have co-designed programmes to support NHS staff to develop their English skills through the use of a mobile teaching facility. Leaders contribute positively to research across the region which helps inform local skills improvement plans.

Leaders have developed positive relationships with other providers of education and training in the areas in which they work. They link well with other local colleges to plan provision to ensure that it responds to the skills needs across the geographical areas where they work. Leaders have developed useful partnerships with a range of universities. They make sure the curriculum prepares learners well for moving into higher education.

Leaders work well with employers across the sector areas in which they offer provision. They understand clearly the changing skills needs in areas such as agriculture, energy and care. For example, leaders have worked with the Microgeneration Certification Scheme to secure significant funding for, and to develop, the Herefordshire Low Carbon Technology Centre. This facility is in direct response to a significant identified skills need from local businesses linked to low carbon and renewable energy technologies.

Leaders have an effective understanding of the communities in which they work. They work proactively with a range of community groups. Leaders and teachers use this information to help plan the curriculum. In areas such as sports, learners and the wider community benefit from these well-established links. Learners deliver coaching sessions to support disabled young people. This supports learners to develop their knowledge and skills and also contributes positively to the wider communities the college serve.

Leaders have a clear curriculum vision which they successfully realise to provide a broad range of programmes across the large geographical area in which they work. This supports learners and apprentices to access local provision. Leaders are very knowledgeable about the needs and priorities of each of the college campuses. They provide programmes that contribute to the skills needs of the locality. In the north of the region, the curriculum in land-based studies responds directly to the focus on dairy farming. Whereas, in the south of the region, the land-based curriculum is focused much more closely on arable farming. Learners and apprentices who study in these areas develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to work in this sector area.

Leaders and teachers use the information they gain from well-developed relationships with employers and stakeholders across the sector areas in which they work to plan the curriculum carefully. They ensure the curriculum that learners and apprentices access is up to date and linked well to industry areas. Apprentices in electrical studies

develop their knowledge and skills in the use of renewable technologies such as solar power, electric vehicle charging and ground and air source heat pumps.

Source: Ofsted Inspection Report – October 2022