

ANNUAL STRATEGIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2022/23

JANUARY 2024

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AND INPUTS



ENGAGEMENT AND
PARTICIPATION



IMPACT ON DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION



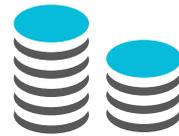
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Annual Strategic Impact Assessment is a high level analytical document which reviews the college's progress in delivering our Strategic Plan. It explicitly assesses the impact the college has made on its learners and the wider economy. The Annual Strategic Impact Assessment (ASIA) subsumes the former self-assessment report and the College has been using this format since 2014-15.

In the previous academic year (2021-22) the College experienced another exceptional year as the world continued to recover from the pandemic. The year (2022-23) was much more the return to normal we hoped for, with mitigations and exceptional arrangements being removed and all assessment activity returning to pre-pandemic conditions. There will be times in this ASIA therefore that we compare our performance with pre-pandemic levels, rather than recent years, as we try to judge how well we have returned to expected levels of performance.

For academic year 2022-23, it was still the case for many of our students this was their first time sitting formal exams, following pandemic arrangements. It was also a year where we saw a heightened level of student support needs and the College was pleased to provide additional tutoring and support sessions to help students through this.

In recognition of the above our Annual Strategic Impact Assessment format remains much like the previous year. It still aims to show clearly the main strategic outputs that we have achieved for every key client group that we serve. Where possible this is benchmarked against appropriate national comparators, thereby allowing all stakeholders can see how the College has performed in terms of key outputs such as achievement, diversity, participation, satisfaction and regional skills priorities.

We hope that this format allows stakeholders to see the impact the College has achieved both in terms of our strategic outputs and the work undertaken over the past year. We are incredibly proud of the role the College has played and continues to play in supporting our community. Further information on the college's performance can be found on the Dudley Dashboard on the college's website. This is updated throughout the year to keep our stakeholders informed of our ongoing performance.

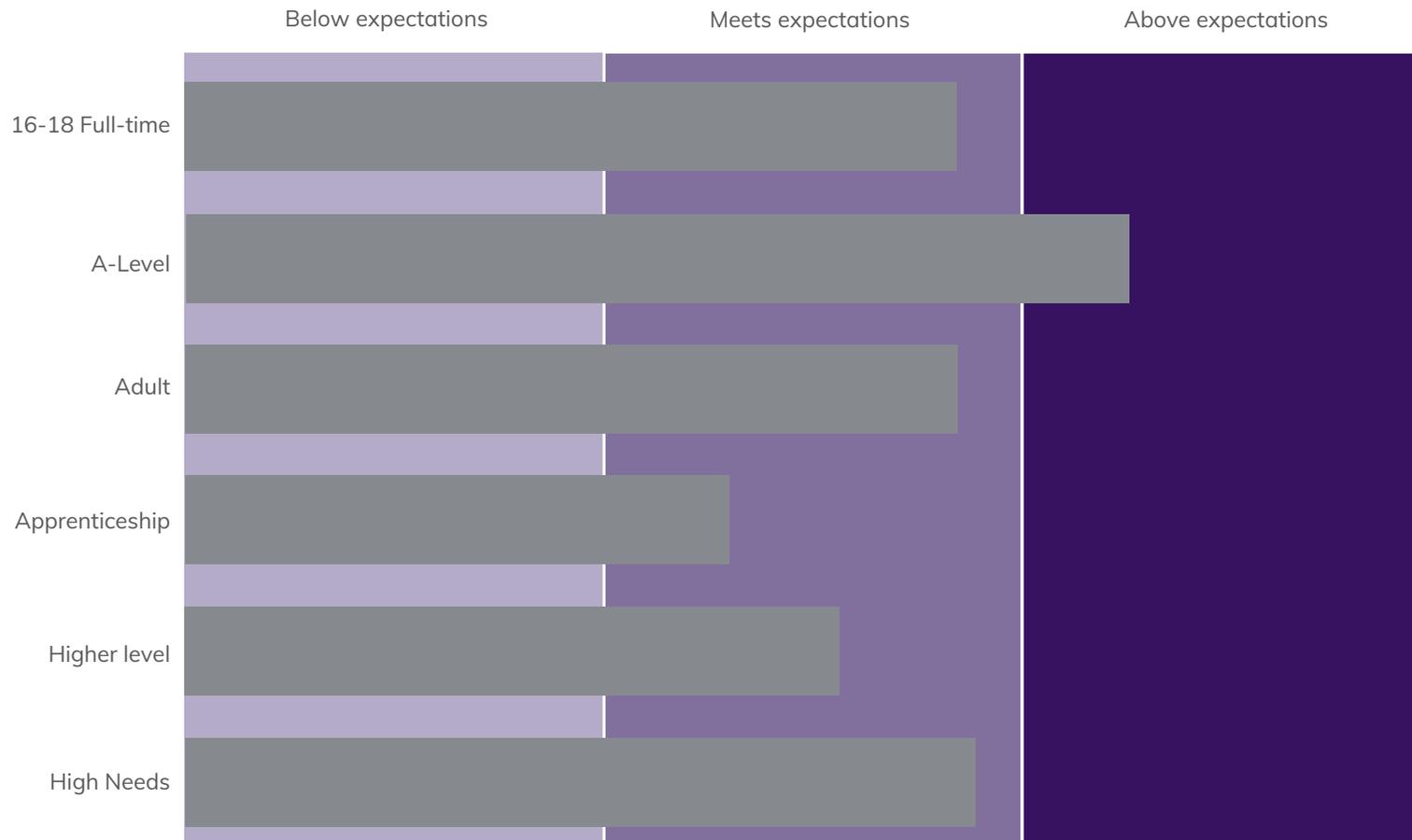
We also recognise that we could not have achieved what we have done without the incredible support of our community and the employers we serve locally. Dudley College of Technology is proud to be a member of a fantastic community which is working together for the benefit of us all.





1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - BALANCED SCORECARD

HOW IS THE COLLEGE PERFORMING FOR EACH KEY CLIENT GROUP?



16-18 LEARNERS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'meeting expectations'. This group is exceeding expectations in terms of diversity of our learners and the alignment of our programmes to regional skills needs. All other measures are currently meeting college expectations. Whilst there are some excellent outcomes in these measures, there are further improvements we still wish to make before we would consider it 'above expectations'.

A-LEVEL LEARNERS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'above expectations'. It is particularly pleasing to see our continued trend in high grade performance and the positive destinations our students go on to after completing their studies with us. We will continue to drive for the highest achievement across all groups of A-level students.

ADULT LEARNERS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. The group is exceeding expectations in terms of satisfaction and the sheer diversity of learners and provision that we offer. We are pleased to see our collaborative work with West Midlands Combined Authority better equipping local residents with the skills required to contribute towards ambitious growth for the region, but we recognise we must do more to support more people to access training and move forward with successful employment.

APPRENTICESHIPS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. Apprentices' retention has impacted the achievement rates within this provision which is mainly down to three reasons which are out of our control. We are aware of apprentices not completing on time, however, pass rates are high within this provision. The alignment of our provision to regional skills needs continue to be a strength.

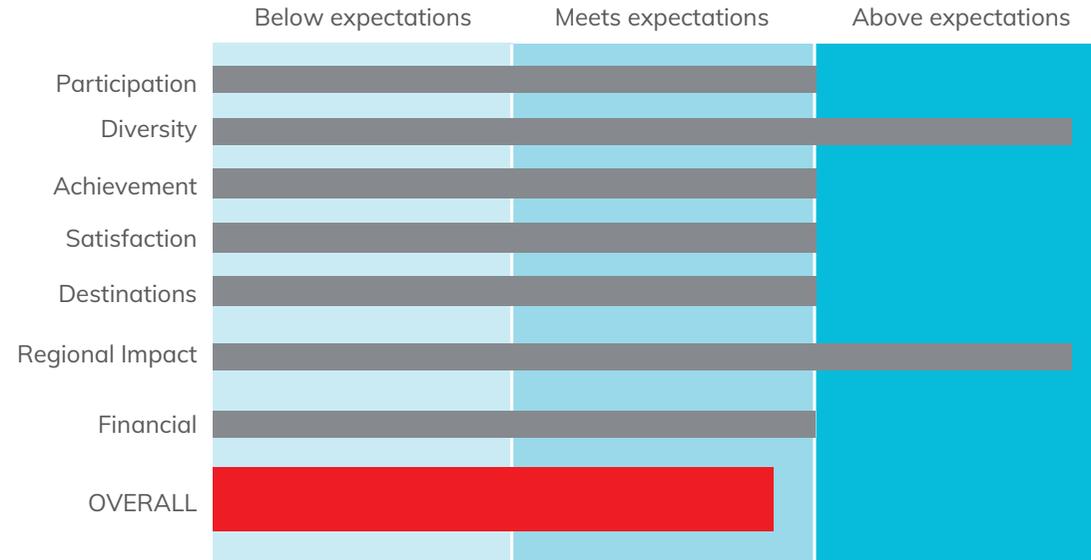
HIGHER SKILLS LEARNERS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. Our focus going forward will be to continue to expand the range of programmes at higher level by offering non-traditional routes to HE, delivered from the Institute of Technology and in partnership with regional Universities. We are looking to increase the number of students progressing from feeder programmes to the College's HE provision, particularly through the College's involvement in the Aspire to HE project initiative.

HIGH NEEDS LEARNERS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. We are very proud of the diverse student body who achieve at least as well as their peers, as well as the very high satisfaction we have for these programmes. Our focus going forward is to continue to expand opportunities for more high needs learners to transition into the workplace for the benefit of them and the region.

2. FULL-TIME LEARNERS AGED 16-18 YEARS BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'meeting expectations'. This group is exceeding expectations in terms of diversity of our learners and the alignment of our programmes to regional skills needs. All other measures are currently meeting college expectations. Whilst there are some excellent outcomes in these measures, there are further improvements we still wish to make before we would consider it 'above expectations'.



SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

What key outputs did we achieve?

We continued to maintain high levels of local participation in skills-based learning:

- We engaged 4,531 young people in learning in 2022/23.

We successfully engaged learners from diverse communities:

- 1,569 learners (32.1%) were from ethnic minority groups. Our learners are more diverse than the local community where 11.9% of the population are from minority groups.
- 894 learners (19.9%) reported a learning difficulty or disability.

We supported high numbers of learners to successfully achieve their chosen programme of study:

- Over 80% of all 16-18 learners achieved their qualifications which is in line with national statistics.
- 100% of T Level learners passed their qualification against a national rate of 90.5% with 47% of these students achieving Distinction grades, against a national rate of 22%.
- There are no significant gaps in achievement rates of male and female learners and those with and without a learning difficulty or disability.

We made a significant impact on the local skills gap by upskilling young people:

- 2,747 (61%) young people were following STEM programmes of study which was an increase of 5% compared to 21/22.
- 584 (61.5%) learners completing their level 2 programme, (those who joined us with less than 5 GCSEs grade C or above from school), progressed immediately to an advanced level skills programme. This also demonstrated an increase in performance of 7.2% compared to the previous year.
- We supported 194 learners to achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE English resits. This was 50% of learners and maintained a strong performance.

We successfully support the vast majority of our learners into positive destinations:

- 92.5% of our learners continued into training, employment or higher education.

We continued to achieve high levels of learner satisfaction against national comparators.

- Full-time 16 to 18 learners were more satisfied across all key areas than their peers from other grade 2 and better colleges.

What better outputs could we achieve?

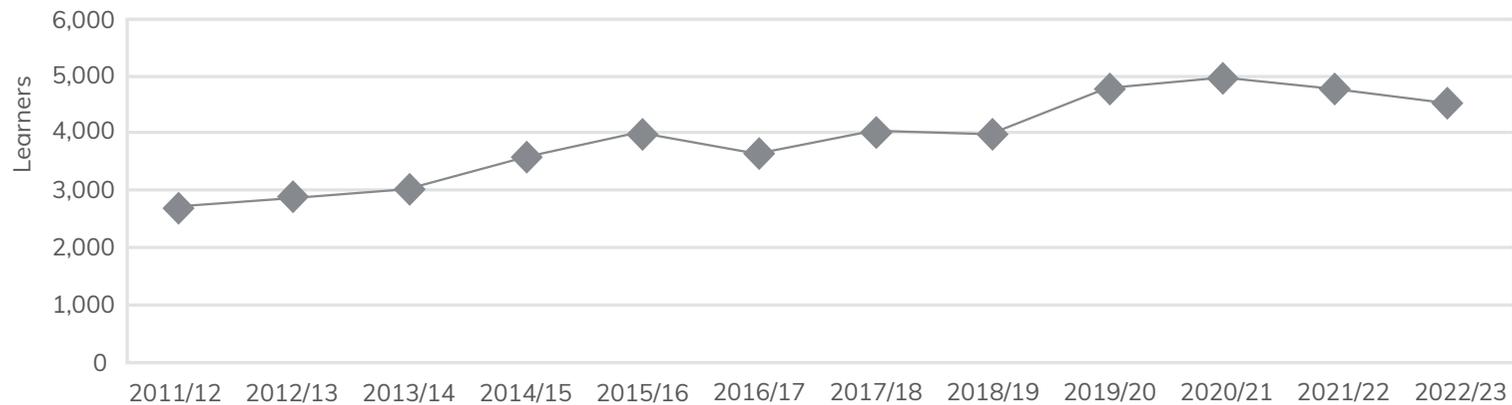
- Improve recruitment to certain curriculum areas.
- Continue to improve achievement rates on L1 and L2 programmes of study.
- Close the achievement gaps between mixed ethnicity learners and their peers.
- Support more young people on technical training to achieve high grades.
- Improve English & mathematics attendance.
- Improve the number of young people achieving a 4 or above in GCSE mathematics resits.





2.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

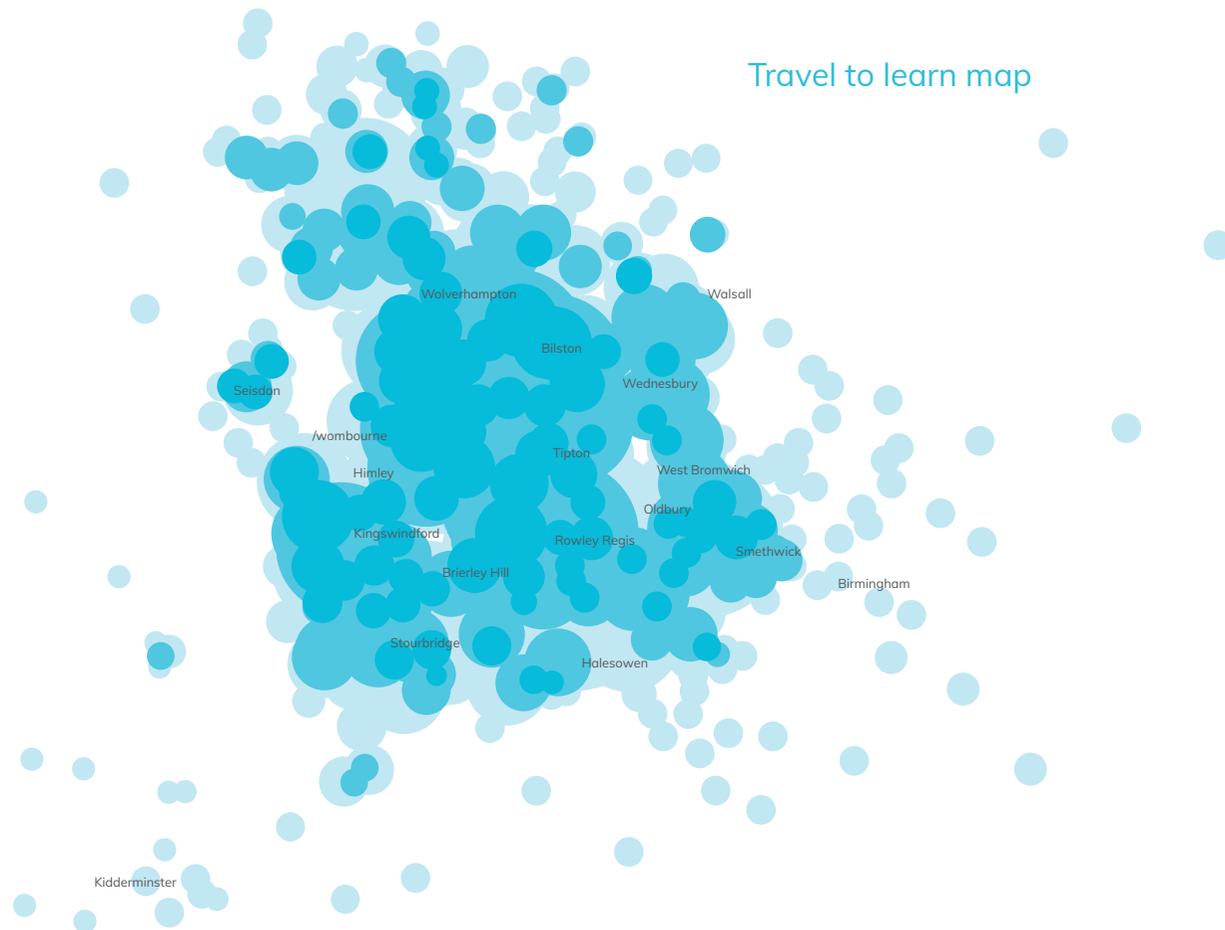
Learner engagement trend analysis
16-18 Classroom Trend



The numbers of 16 to 18 enrolled in 22/23 remained consistent with 21/22. Continued high numbers of 16-18 learners confirms high levels of confidence in Dudley College of Technology and will continue to support the regional economy as well as our own financial health.



2.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

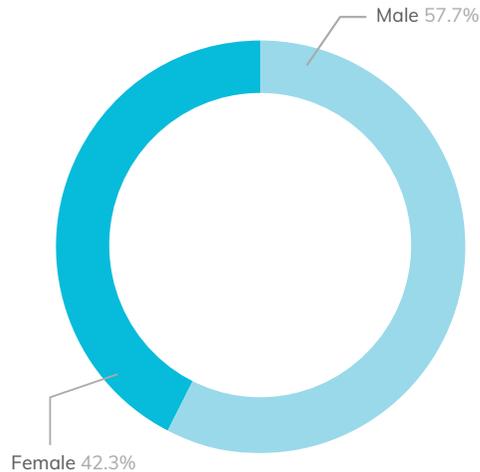


The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our learners in 2022/23. Most learners are from Dudley borough, as you would expect, with increasing numbers of learners looking to remain in Dudley to study rather than travel elsewhere. Our highly equipped estate across the Dudley and Brierley Hill Learning Quarters continue to transform the lives of young people aged 16-18 across the wider region.

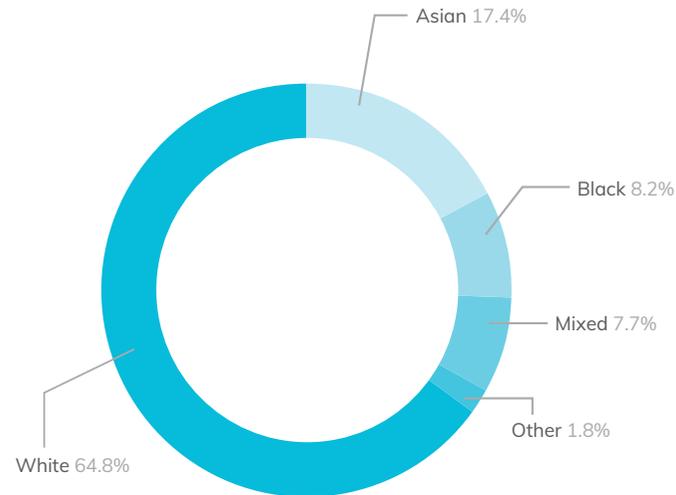


2.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

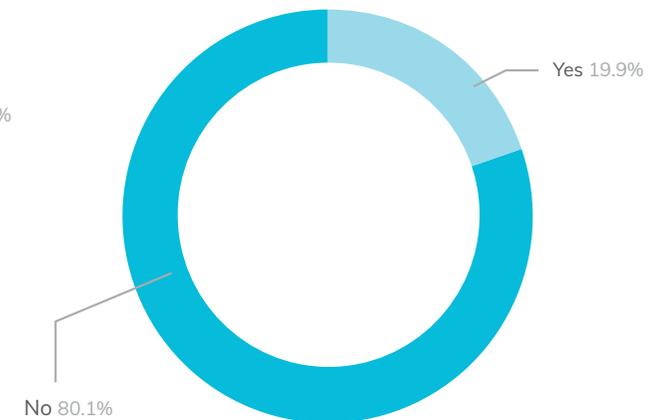
Gender



Ethnicity



Learning difficulty or disability



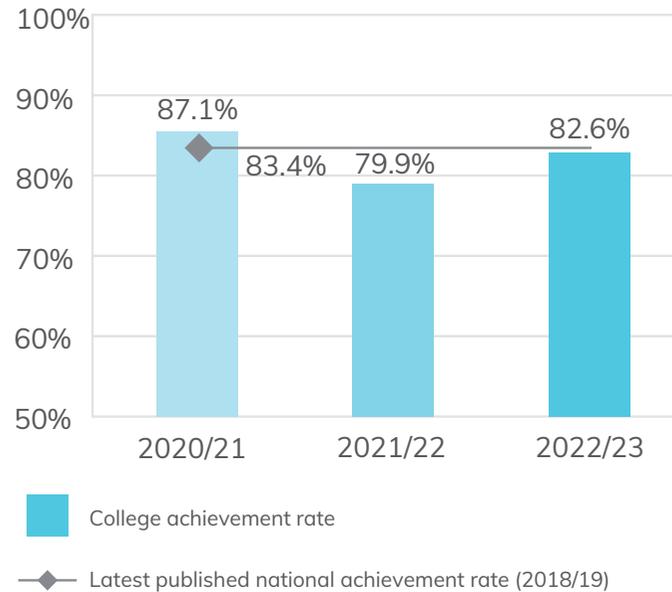
For learners aged 16-18, there continued to be more male learners in 2022/23 than female, however both groups achieved at very similar rates. We continue to support a diverse cohort of learners with the 16-18 ethnicity profile showing our learners as a group are more diverse than the local population. 32.1% of our learners are from minority groups who make up 11.9% of the local population. Learners of Asian ethnicity continue to succeed above the college average +3.4% as do learners of black ethnicity +5.3%. Learners of mixed heritage ethnicity learners continue to achieve below the college average although the gap has reduced from - 8.3% to -2.9%. The college is working with College's West Midlands Racial Equality Group who have a work stream focused on closing the achievement gap for this group.

1,072 (23.1%) of the 16-18 learners we support have a learning difficulty or disability. This number has remained in line with 21/22 academic year. Learners with difficulties and disabilities achieve at a comparable rate to their peers on core programmes. Learners disclosing a Special Educational Needs Disability achieve at a slightly lower rate on maths and English qualifications. The college is reviewing its approach to maths and English for some of our learners with complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to support their progress in these subjects.



2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Achievement rates - all programmes excluding English & Mathematics



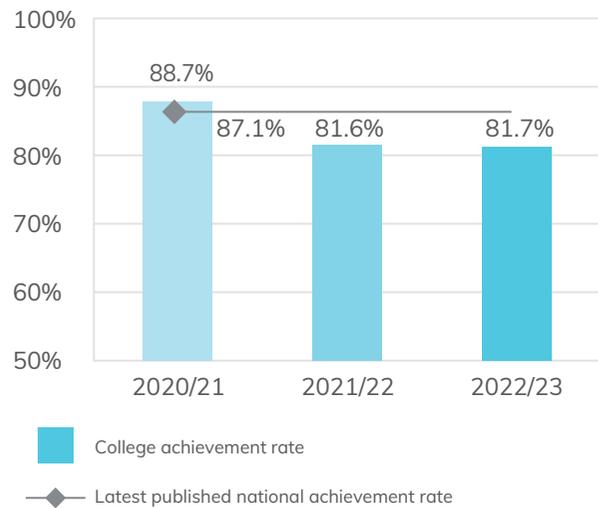
22/23 saw a 2.7% increase in achievement of 16- to 18-year-olds on their technical and vocational programmes putting our learners in line with national rates

Through the Government's 'catch up' funding we were able to offer 549 learners additional tuition to close gaps in their knowledge due to lost learning during the COVID pandemic. We continued to increase the number of learners studying the new T Level qualifications achieving 100% pass rate with 46.5% achieving distinction grades. Both of those measures outperformed the national picture and improved on the previous year.

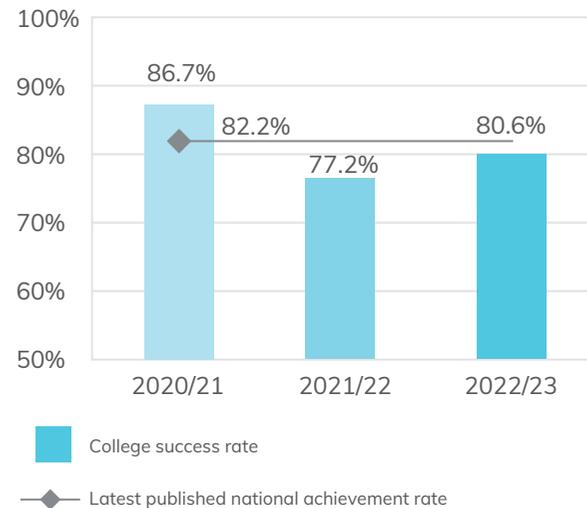


2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

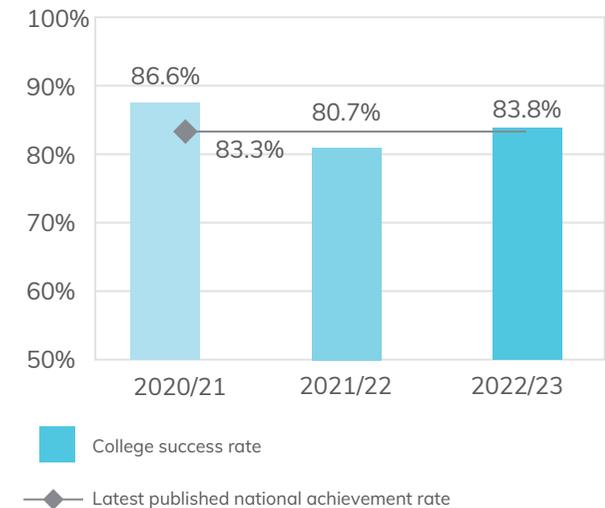
Achievement rate - Level 1



Achievement rate - Level 2



Achievement rate - Level 3



Level 1 achievement rate is now 81.7% which is a marginal increase of +0.1% compared to 21/22.

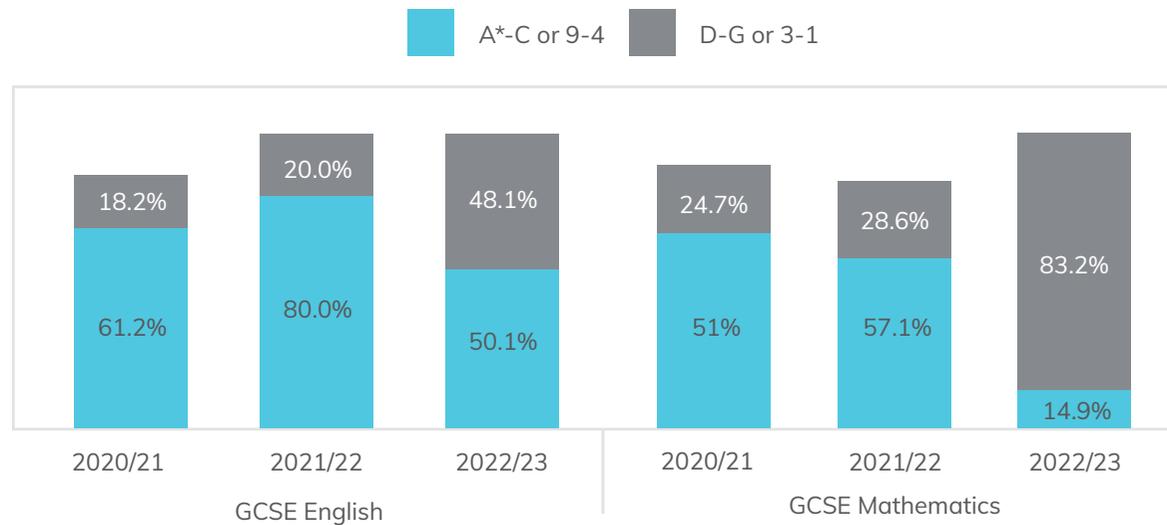
Level 2 achievement rate has seen an increase in 22/23 of +3.4% and is now in line with the national levels of 21/22 at 80.6%.

Level 3 achievement rate is 83.8% which is an increase of +3.1% and now exceeds current published national rates of 83.3%.



2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

GCSE retake results - three year trend



The data does not reflect learners who did not achieve or did not attend.

Achievement of high grades on English resits remained high despite the removal of COVID concessions. 50% achieved a grade 4 or above. In mathematics, we saw a significant drop in performance this year although this remains in line with the national picture. However, one third of learners did move up at least one grade closer to the grade 4.



2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

Functional Skills SfL achievement rate - all levels



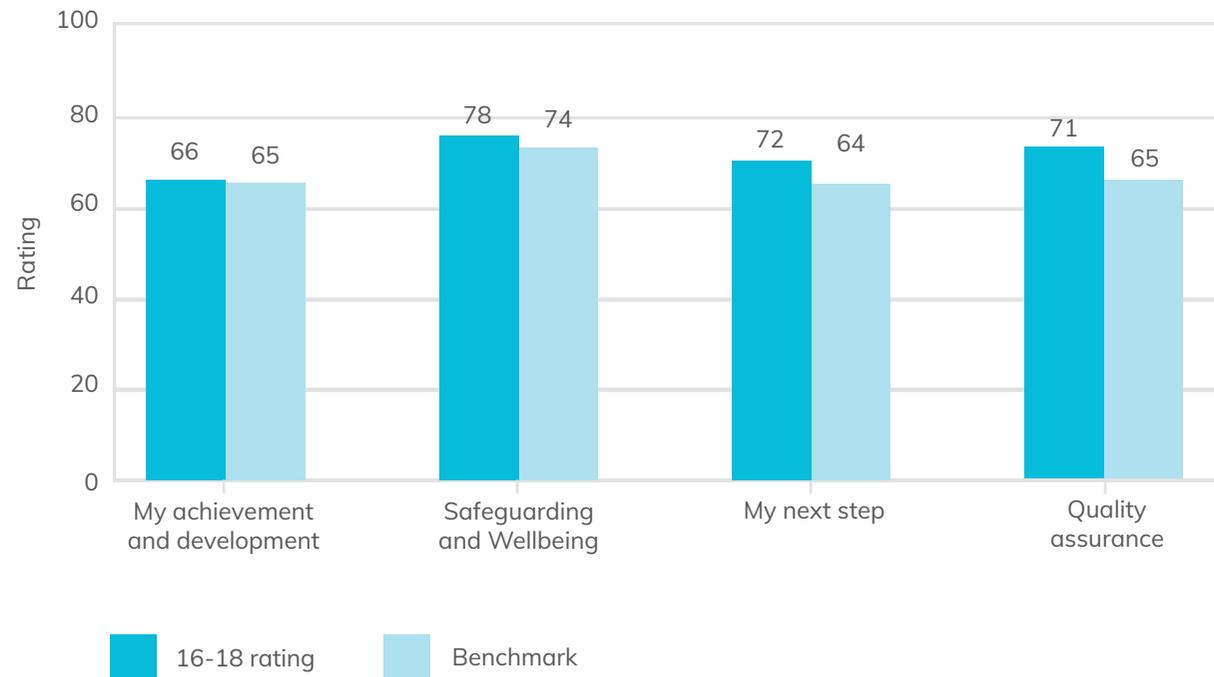
The achievement rates for young people studying Functional Skills English and mathematics qualification continues to improve in 22/23 (+2.8%).

Note – Latest published national rates are only available from 2018-19 due to pandemic.



2.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

End of year learner satisfaction (QDP survey)



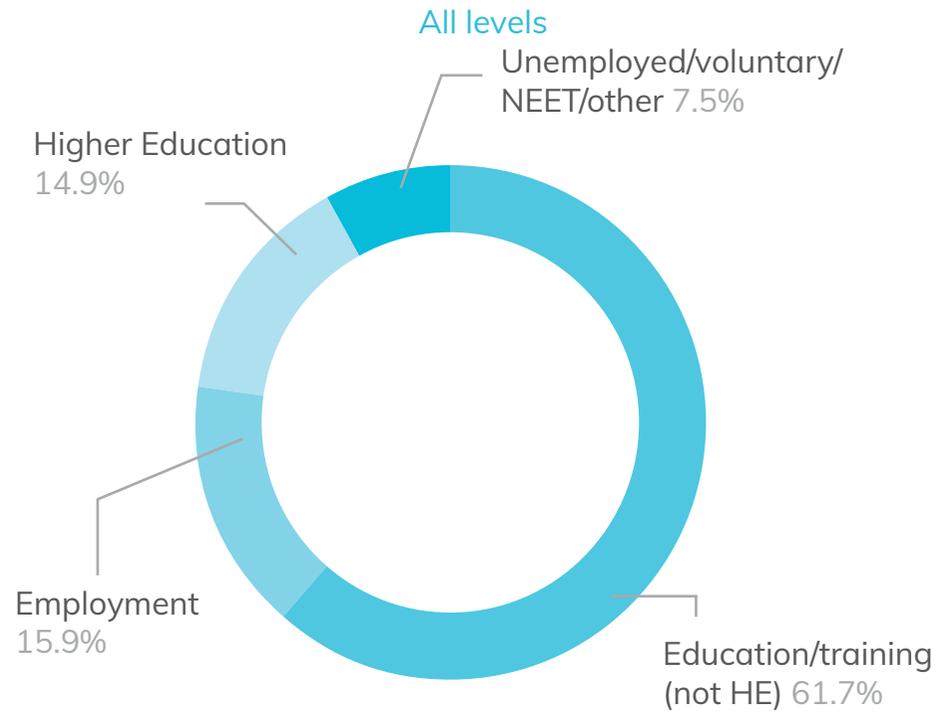
We conduct surveys each year to understand learners' satisfaction with their programme of study and the wider college. Their feedback informs subject area impact assessments and quality improvement plans. The college employs an external agency, QDP, to conduct mid and end year surveys and to benchmark the results against 75 other grade 2 or above general further education colleges.

We are proud of our performance against other providers with an overall 16-18 client's satisfaction rating above the benchmark in all four categories. Despite this overall result we recognise that a minority of areas performed less well and these will be investigated at course level through our Subject Area Impact Assessments (SAIAs) with targeted actions to address any areas for concern.





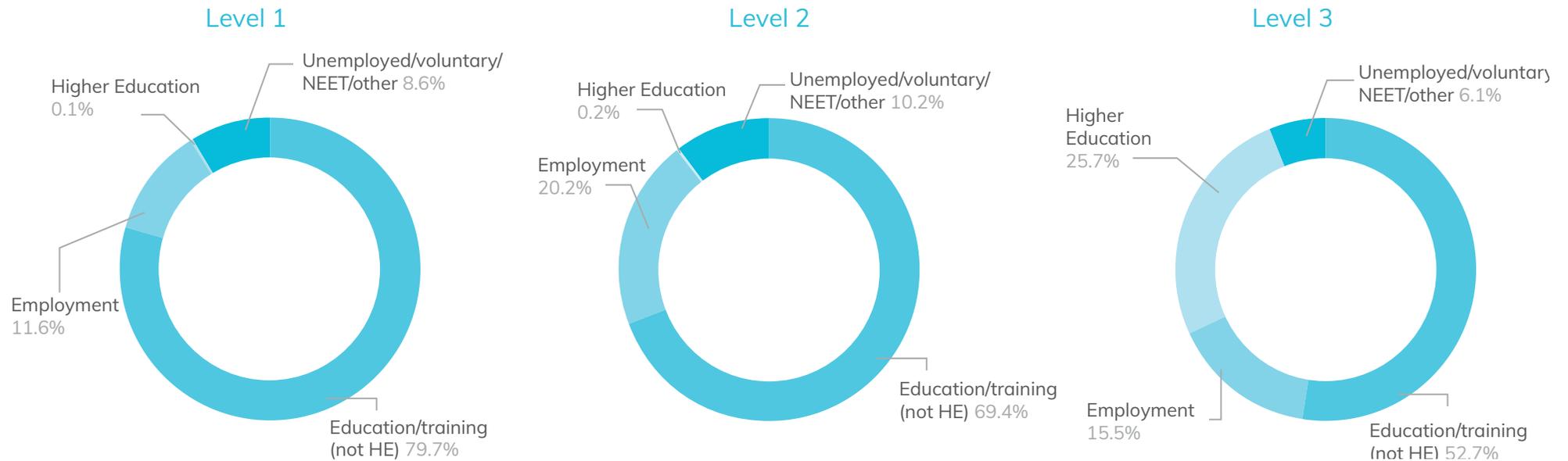
2.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS



We successfully support the vast majority of our learners into positive destinations with 92.5% continuing in training, employment or higher education.



2.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS CONTINUED



91.4% of level 1 learners progressed into positive destinations.

89.8% of Level 2 learners progressed into positive destinations.

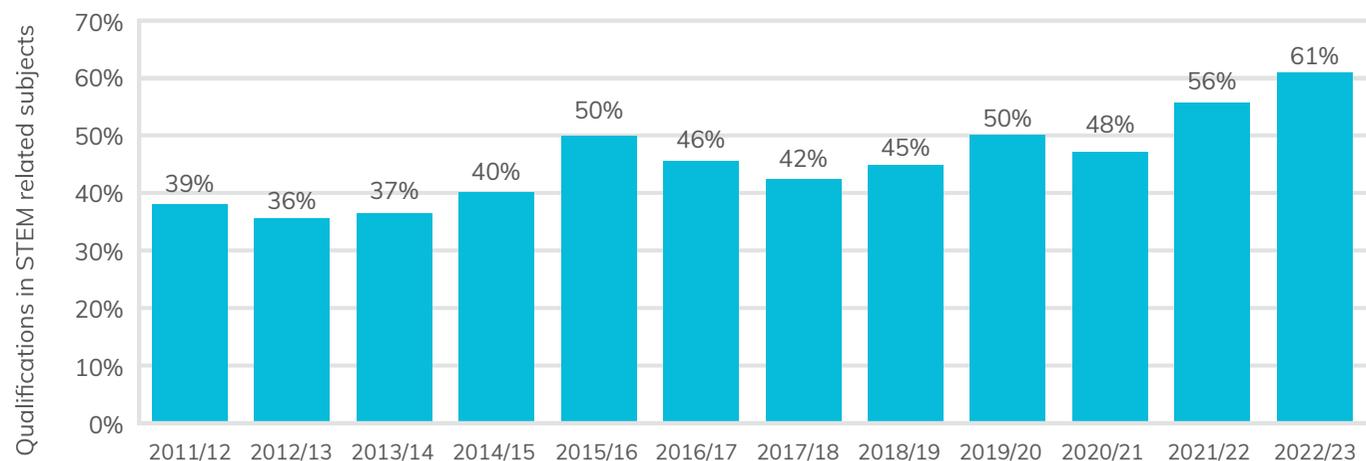
93.9% of Level 3 learners progressed into positive destinations.

The high rates of Level 1 and Level 2 learners continuing in education and training demonstrate the strength of our programmes in supporting young people to progress.



2.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

STEM in the curriculum - trend analysis
16 to 18 Classroom % STEM

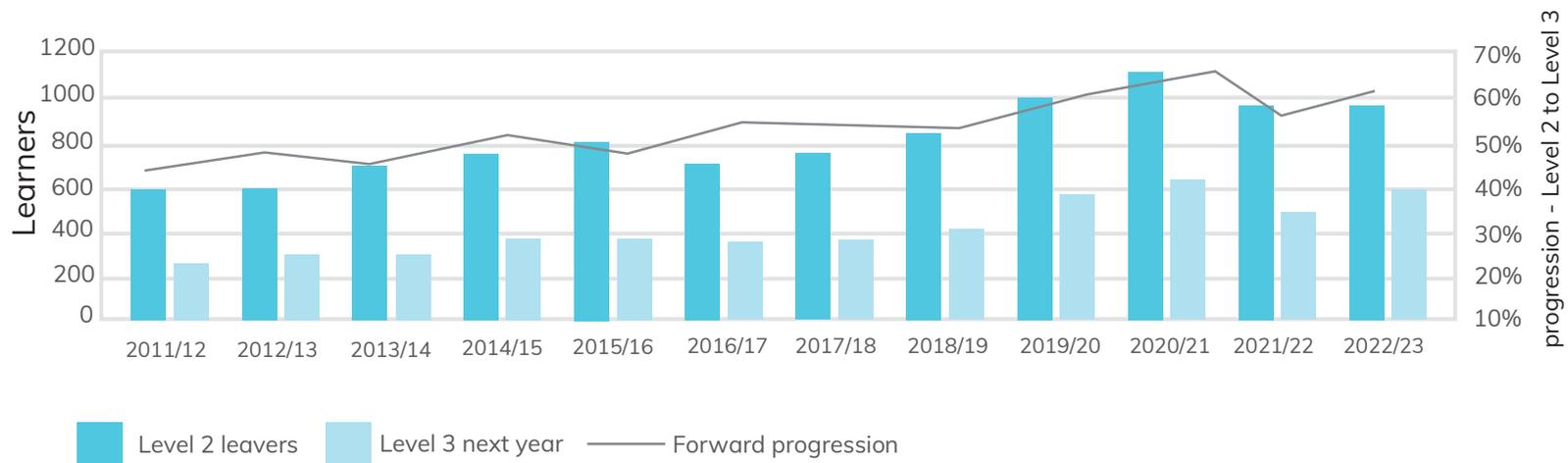


The local economy relies on a workforce with high level skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and especially in mathematics). The chart shows the percentage of qualifications completed by learners aged 16-18 years that were in STEM related subjects. In 2022-23, 2,747 (61%) of our young people followed STEM programmes of study which is an 5% increase on the previous year. The continued upward trend in numbers of our learners studying STEM, demonstrates our ongoing focus on ensuring we develop curriculum to meet the needs of these valuable sectors.



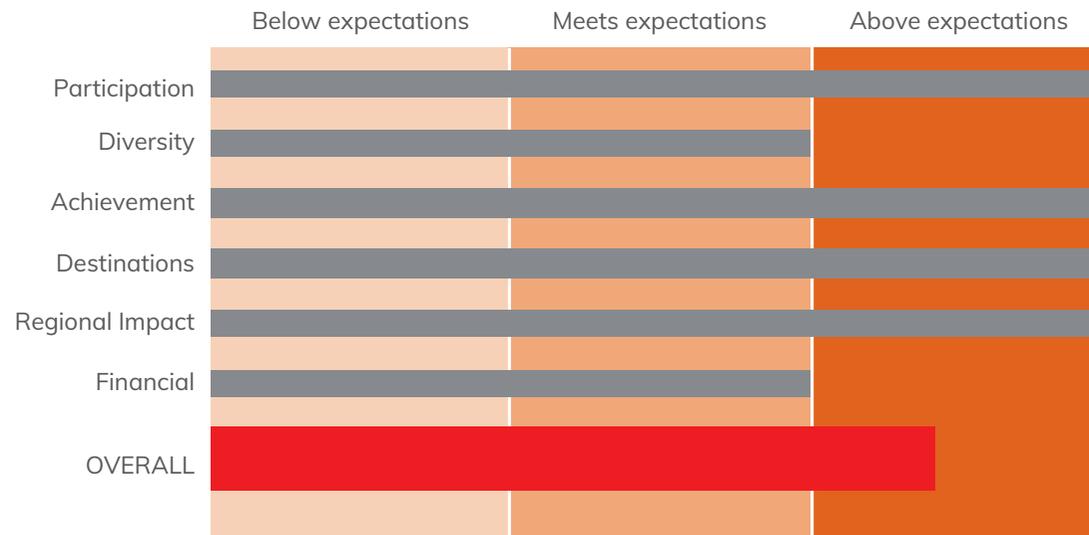
2.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTINUED

Progression to advanced level - trend analysis
16 to 18 Classroom Progression



As detailed in the graph, 61.5% of all the college's level 2 learners progressed directly into level 3 provision. This demonstrates an increase of 7.2% from the previous year and continues to confirm the value of our level 2 provision in supporting learners to progress into advanced level technical training. The growing numbers of learners choosing this option shows the impact the college is having on the lives of young people and the benefits to the local and regional economy.

3. FULL-TIME A LEVEL LEARNERS AGED 16-18 YEARS BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'above expectations'. It is particularly pleasing to see our continued trend in high grade performance and the positive destinations our students go on to after completing their studies with us. We will continue to drive for the highest achievement across all groups of A-level students.



SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

What key outputs did we achieve?

We have continued to significantly increase local participation in A level learning:

- We engaged 621 young people in A and AS levels in 2022/23.
- Despite a falling local demographic over recent years, we have continued the upward trend in increased participation of young people in A and AS levels since the centre opened, with further growth in 2022/23.

We successfully engaged A level learners from diverse communities:

- 319 (45.9%) A and AS learners were from ethnic minority groups. Our A and AS learners are significantly more diverse than the local community where 11.9% of the population are from minority groups.
- 58 (9.4 %) A and AS learners reported a learning difficulty or disability.

We supported A level learners to successfully achieve their programme of study:

- Overall achievement rates on A levels are above national rates and have been for the last three years.
- The number of learners achieving high grades (A* - C) has returned to pre-COVID levels which is pleasing as many of these learners came to us with TAGs.
- The number of learners achieving A*-B was 44.3% which is 7% above the 18/19.

We made a significant impact on the local skills gap by upskilling young people:

- 405(65.2%) A and AS learners were studying STEM subjects.

What better outputs could we achieve?

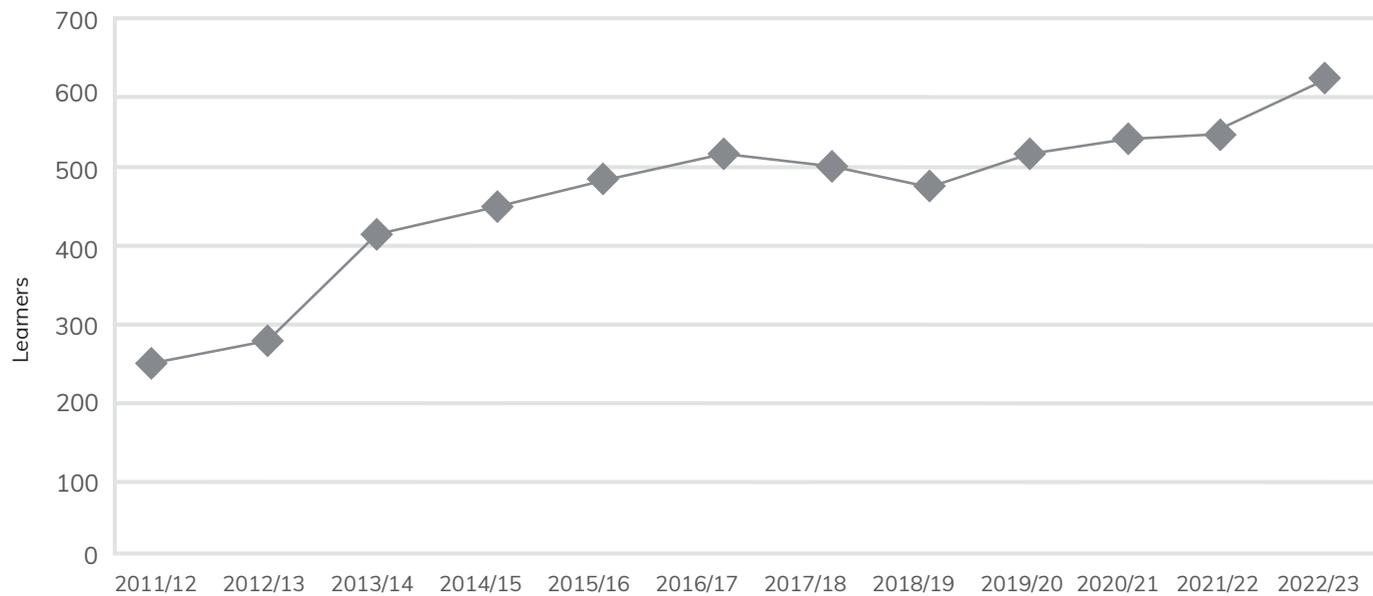
- The number of learners completing A levels progressing into higher apprenticeships.
- Reduce the gap in achievement between learners declaring a disability or learning difficult and those without.





3.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

Learner engagement trend analysis
A Level Trend

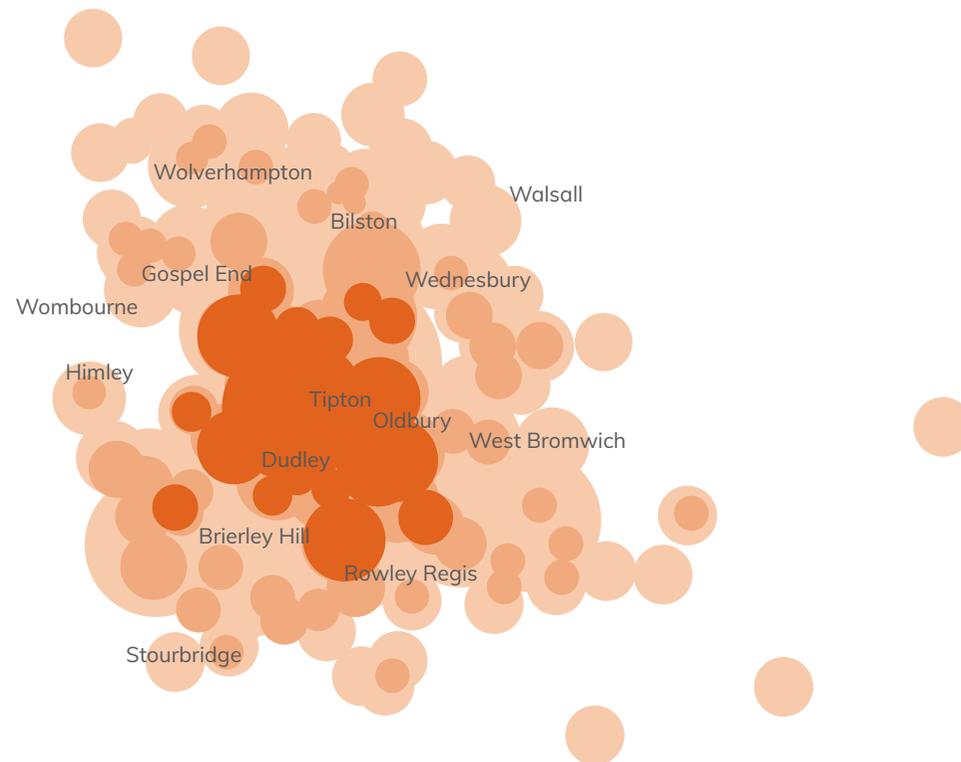


Dudley Sixth has continued its year-on-year growth in student engagement with A Level learning, increasing participation significantly again in 2022/23 to 621 learners. This growth has been influenced by the start of an upturn in the 16-18 population of the borough following a number of years of decline in this demographic, but also by the high-quality A level offer and growing reputation. We have continued to offer more delivery hours per A-Level as well as higher levels of support than other providers.



3.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

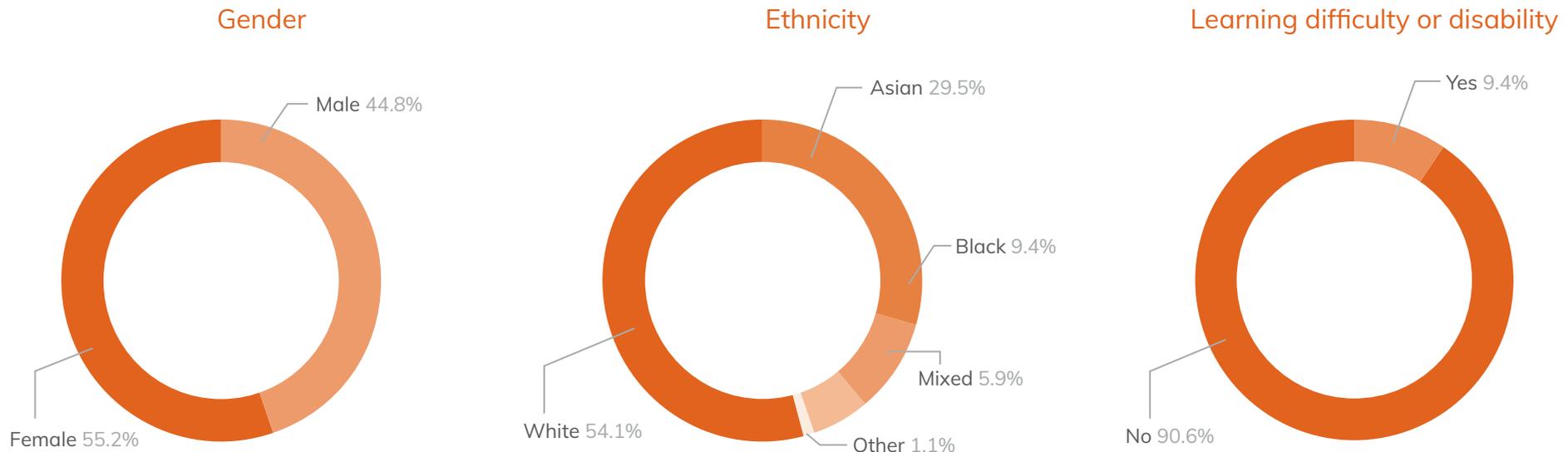
Travel to learn map



The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our A Level learners in 2022/23 is in line with 2021/22. We have continued to be the first choice for many local A Level learners who choose to study at Dudley Sixth rather than travelling elsewhere. We continue to attract learners from the wider region, which demonstrates the confidence young people and their parents have in Dudley Sixth to provide a positive post-16 experience with high levels of success.



3.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Dudley Sixth continues to support a very diverse student body. 2022/23 continued to see more female learners choose to study A levels than male learners. Males achieved at a marginally higher rate than females (+9.2%), which is in contrast to previous years. This is a result of a marginal drop in performance for females but a significant increase in male performance (going from 82.5% to 91.0%).

The A Level ethnicity profile shows our learners are more diverse than the local community and in line with the previous year with 45.9% of our learners from minority groups who make up 11.9% of the local population. The upward trend in improvement in achievement for black learners has continued, and an enhanced focus on those learners who identified as 'mixed' has closed the gap in achievement we acknowledged in 21/22 with a big improvement for these learners.

Dudley Sixth supports a number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities through a wide range of support mechanisms, with the proportion of learners declaring a disability/learning difficulty remaining broadly the same, 2022/23 – 58 learners compared to 51 in 2020/21. Achievement rates of this group are slightly lower than their peers which will be a heightened focus for the college in the next year.

**DUDLEY SIXTH
CONTINUES TO
SUPPORT A
VERY DIVERSE
LEARNER BODY.**



3.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Overall achievement rate - A Level



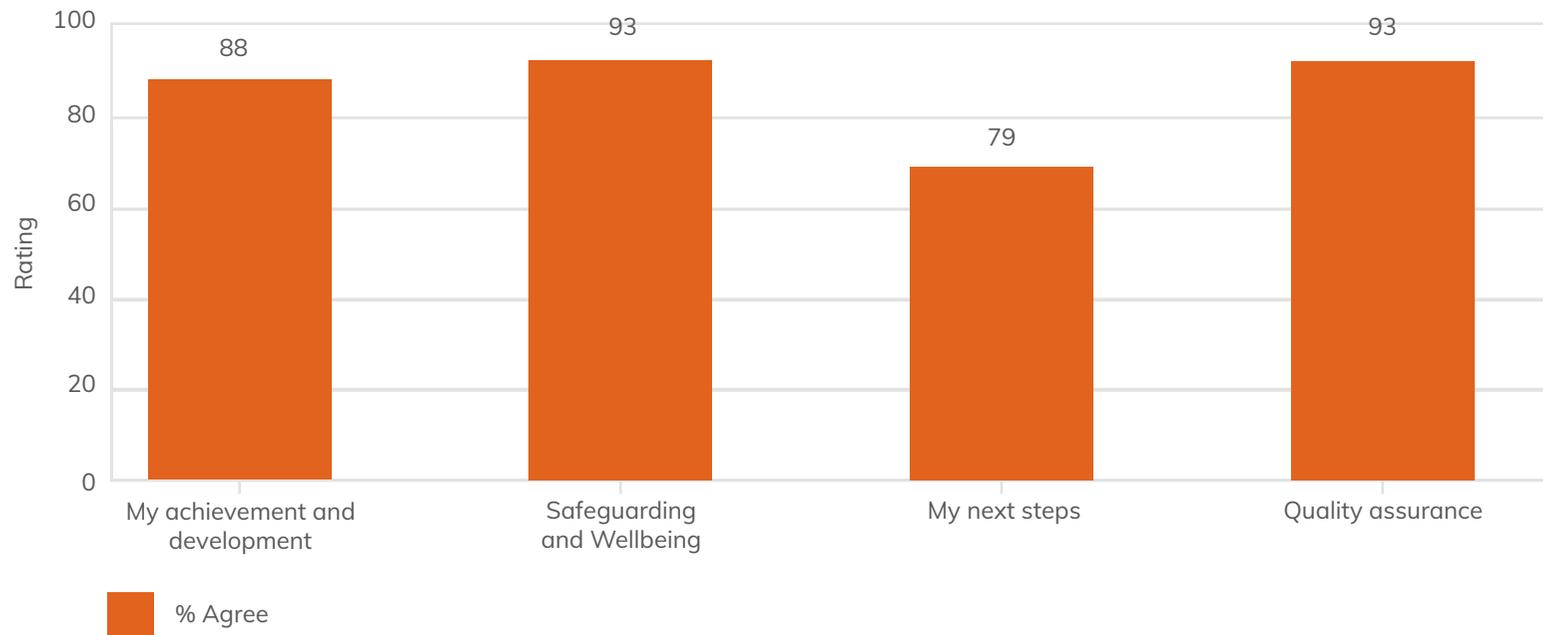
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
High grade pass % (A-B)	55.9%	58.0%	44.3%
High grade pass % (A-C)	88.9%	80.1%	73.8%

As a centre we achieved 73.8% A*-C grades - which compares to a West Midlands JCQ rate of 52%. Although this is down on the previous year's results of 80.1% - this represents an increase from the last examined year without mitigations (18-19). Overall results were affected by some eccentric mark schemes in Maths, Physics and Computer Science as well as depressed grades nationally.



3.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

End of year learner satisfaction (QDP survey)



Dudley Sixth end of year survey was administered by QDP to ascertain the views of A-level learners. The graph above shows very high percentage levels of satisfaction amongst these learners with all four question categories showing above 79% satisfaction levels.

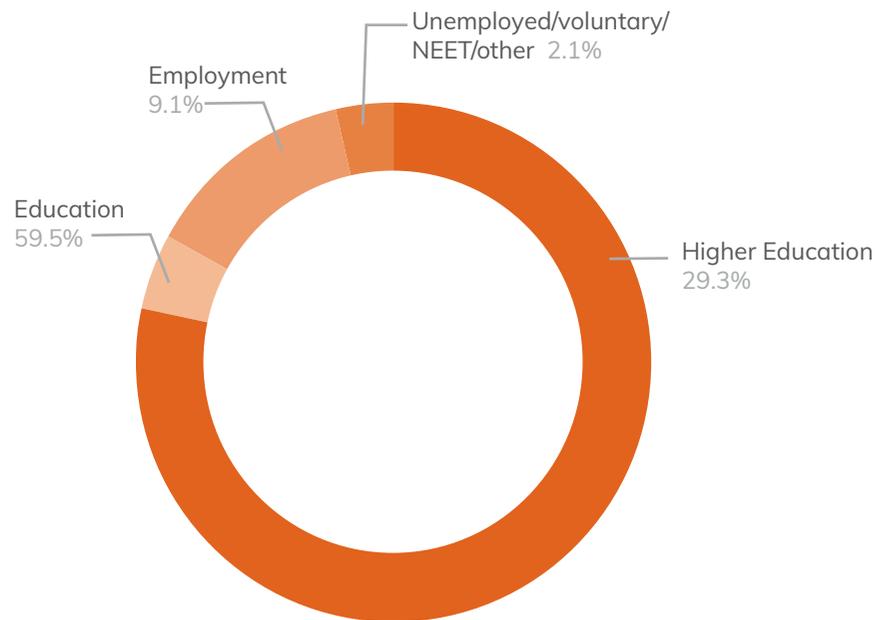
For 'next steps' questions we would like to do more to ensure A-level learners are aware of all of the options available to them after college, not just university.

The overall comments made by learners in the end of year survey were very positive. Example comments include "Tutor amazing", "Great learning experience", "Subject taught very well" and "Interactive lessons which makes learning interesting".



3.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

A Levels - 2nd years

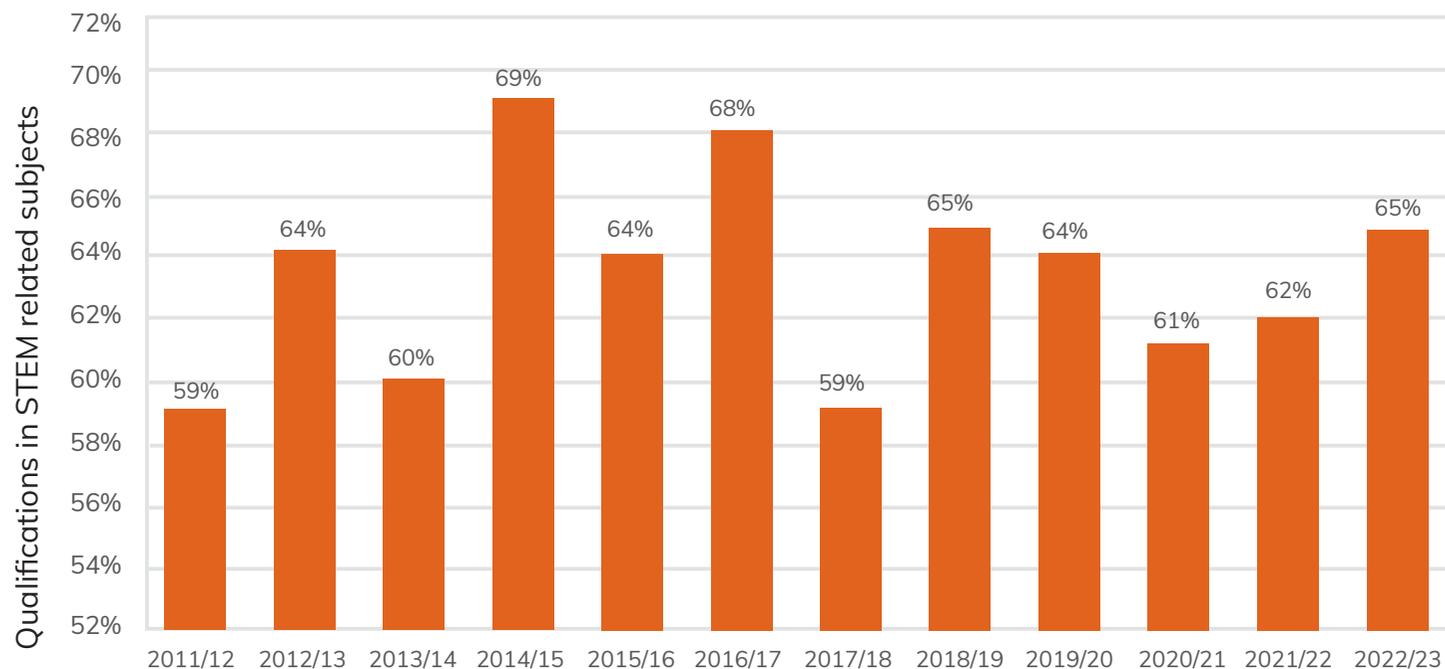


A level destination data confirms 96.6% of our learners gain positive destinations with the majority progressing into higher education. This demonstrates the significant impact the Dudley Sixth provision has on the lives of young people within the borough and the wider region: enhancing future career opportunities and benefitting the local economy.



3.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

STEM in the curriculum - trend analysis

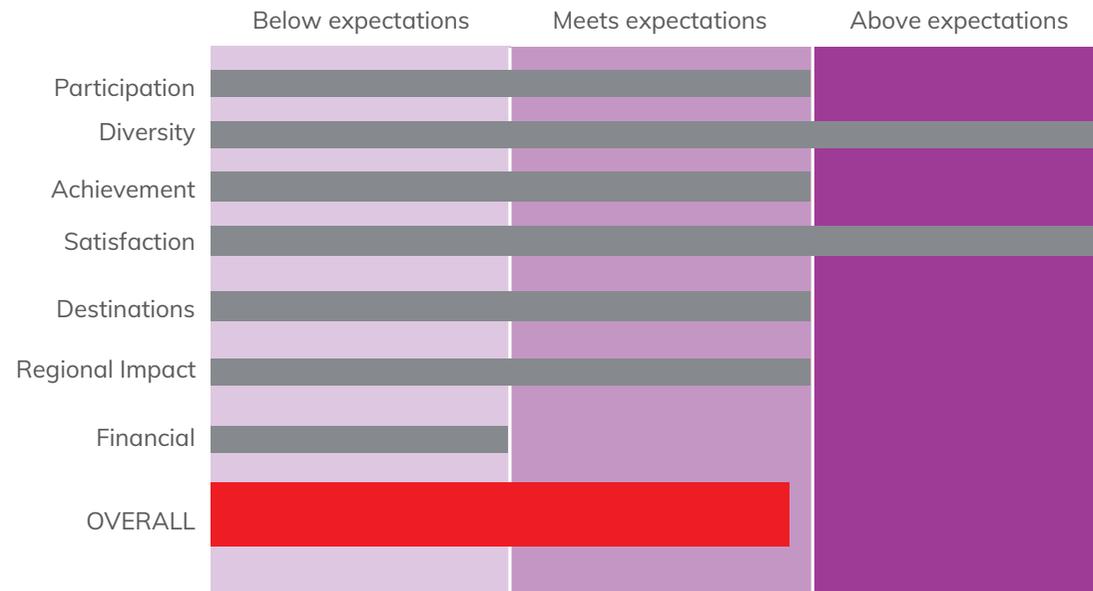


The local economy relies on a workforce with high level skills and skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The chart above shows the percentage of qualifications completed by A level learners that were in STEM related subjects. This shows an increase of 3% compared to the previous year.

There continues to be a very strong focus on STEM provision across Dudley College of Technology including Dudley Sixth.

We are committed to finding more opportunities for A-level learners to continue to higher education locally so that their skills might benefit the regional economy and the opening of the Black Country & Marches Institute of Technology has provided further progression pathways into higher apprenticeships and employment. The development of the Health Innovation Centre will continue to expand the opportunities for learners in the region.

4. FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME ADULT SKILLS LEARNERS BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. The group is exceeding expectations in terms of satisfaction and the sheer diversity of learners and provision that we offer. We are pleased to see our collaborative work with West Midlands Combined Authority better equipping local residents with the skills required to contribute towards ambitious growth for the region, but we recognise we must do more to support more people to access training and move forward with successful employment.



SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

What key outputs did we achieve?

We engaged local adults in skills based learning:

- We engaged 3,045 adults in skills programmes in 2022/23 which is in line with the strong performance in 2021/2022.
- We continue to provide an increasingly diverse and innovative curriculum offer, designed to appeal to local adults and their skills needs.

We successfully engaged learners from diverse communities:

- 1,345 learners (45.3%) were from ethnic minority groups. Our learners continue to be more diverse than the local community where 11.5% of the population are from minority groups.
- 429 learners (14.3%) reported a learning difficulty or disability.

We maintained high achievement rates on adult skills programmes:

- Achievement rates for learners on technical and vocational programmes remained consistently high and at national rates.
- There are no significant differences in the success rates of learners from different ethnic backgrounds or those with and without a disability.
- Female learners achieved at a slightly lower rate than their male peers (-6.4%).

We made a significant impact on the local skills gap by upskilling adults:

- 1492 (49%) adults were following STEM programmes of study. This is an increase on the previous year.
- 1481 (30%) adult enrolments were in West Midlands Combined Authority priority sectors.

We made a significant impact on the local skills gap by upskilling adults:

- 876 (29.5%) adults were following STEM programmes of study. This is an increase on the previous year.
- 1,621 adult enrolments were in West Midlands Combined Authority priority sectors.

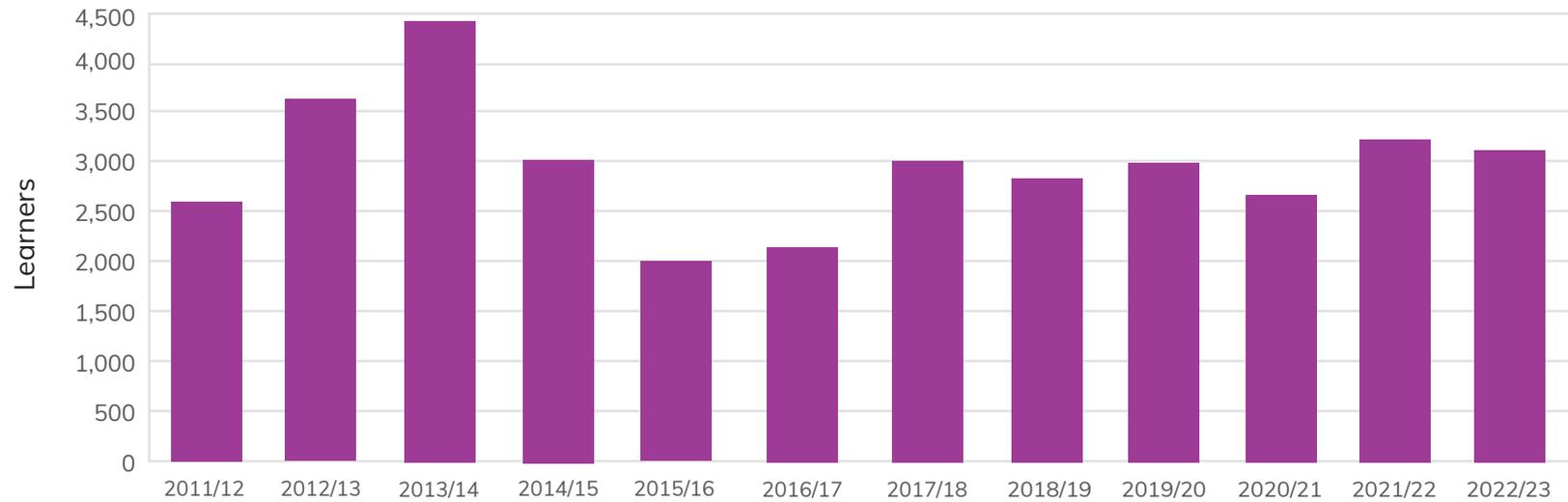
What better outputs could we achieve?

- Continue to improve the retention and achievement on Access programmes.
- Continue to increase the participation in level 3 courses.
- Reducing the number of learners whose destination is 'unemployed'.
- The number of entry level and level 1 learners reporting positive destinations.
- Increased achievement rates at level 1 and 2 including English and mathematics.



4.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

Learner engagement trend analysis
Adult Classroom Trend

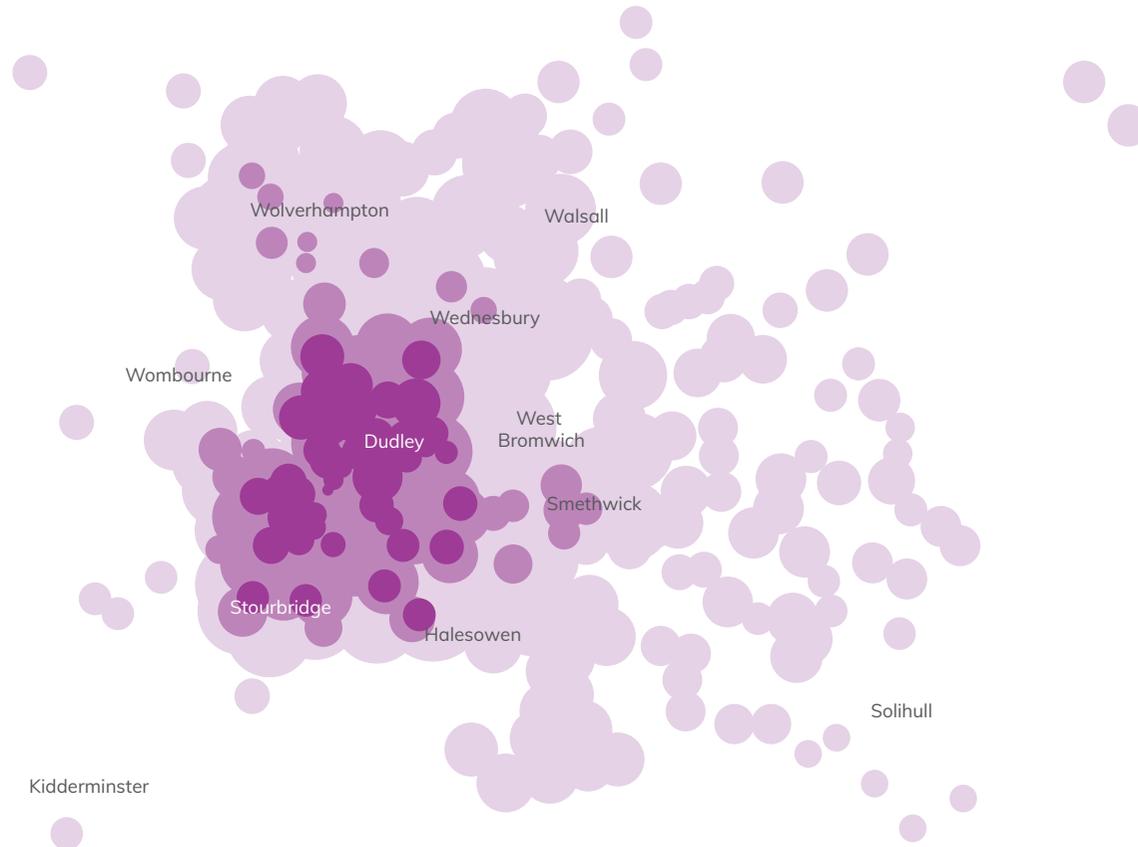


We maintained strong recruitment onto adult programmes which remains above pre-pandemic numbers.



4.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

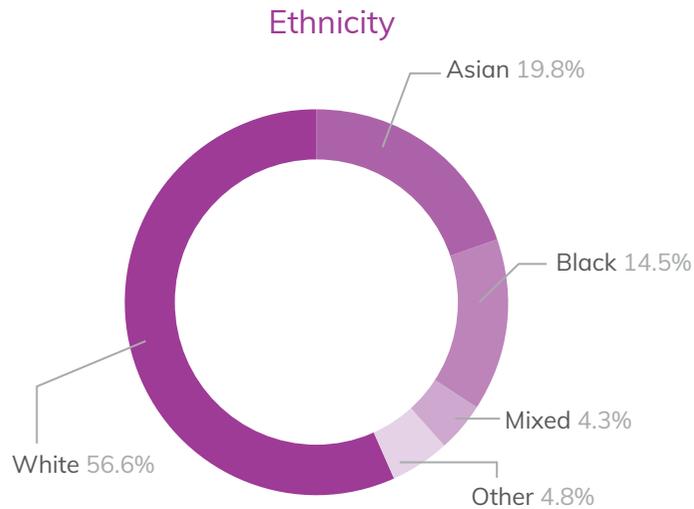
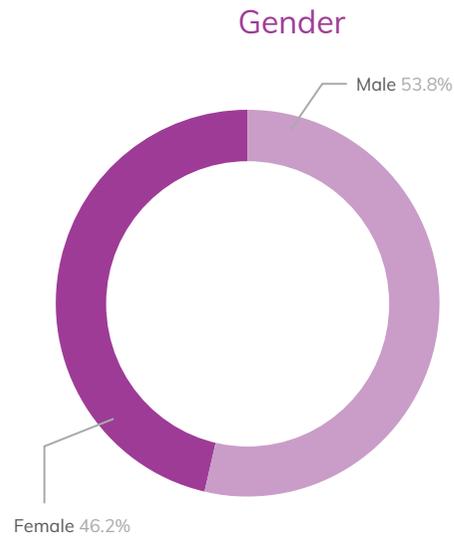
Travel to learn map



The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our adult learners in 2022/23. There is an increasing number of adult learners looking to remain in Dudley to study rather than travel elsewhere.



4.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



The college continues to support a very diverse student body. Contrary to 2021/22, more males engaged with learning in 2022/2023. The ethnicity profile shows our adult learners as a group are increasingly more diverse than the local community. 43.4% of our learners are from minority groups. There are no significant achievement gaps based on ethnicity. When achievements of male and female learners are compared, males achieved at higher rate than females (+6.5%)

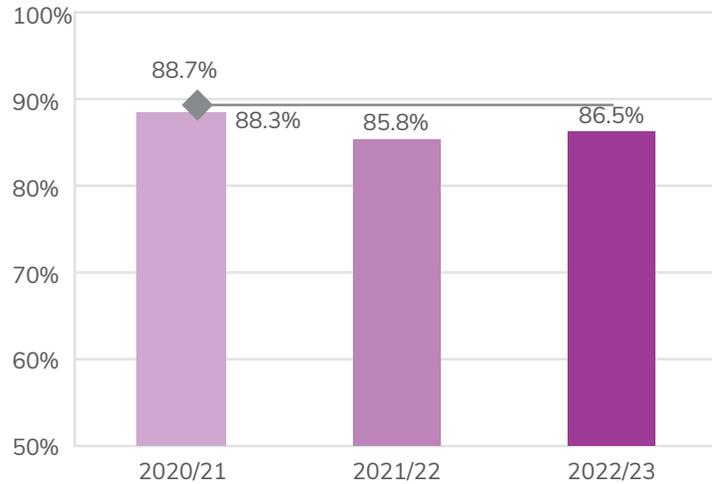
The college was pleased to support 429 adult learners with a declared learning difficulty or disability in 2022/23, through a wide range of support services. There is no significant difference in the achievement rates of adults who declare a disability and those who do not.

THE COLLEGE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT A VERY DIVERSE LEARNER BODY.



4.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Achievement rate - all levels



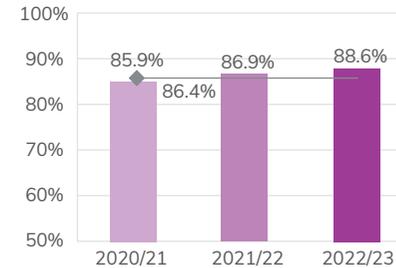
College achievement rate

Latest published national achievement rate (2018/19)

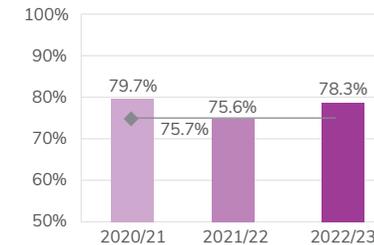
Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Overall achievement rates for our adult learners remain relatively stable compared with previous years, with a slight dip in Level 1 achievement of 1.8 % predominantly due to retention on ESOL programmes. At level 2 achievement rates are above last published national. Level 3 achievement rates have also increased on last year and are now comfortably above national rates at 78.3%

Note – Latest published national rates are only available from 2018-19 due to pandemic.



4.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

Functional skills achievement rate - all levels



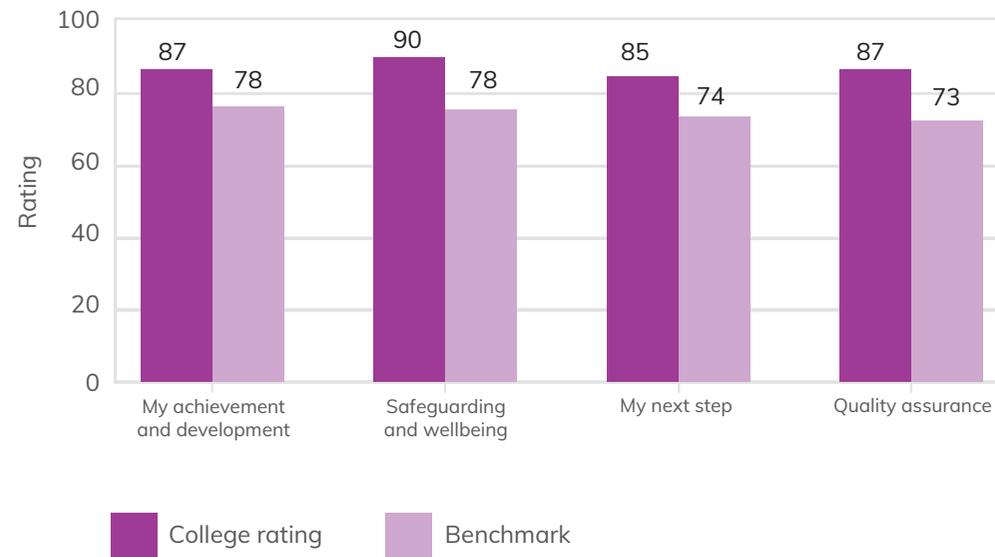
We have seen a slight reduction in those learners achieving in English and mathematics across GCSE and Functional Skills and will work on reversing this trend in the next year.





4.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

Year-end learner satisfaction (QDP survey)

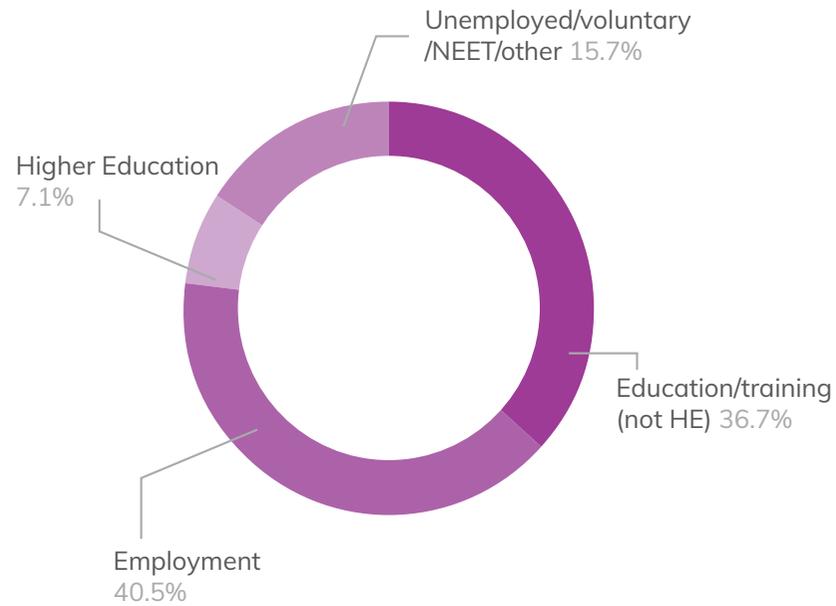


We use an external company to administer our student satisfaction QDP. This enables us to be benchmarked against other outstanding providers. Adults continue to be extremely satisfied with all elements of their programmes when compared with other colleges.

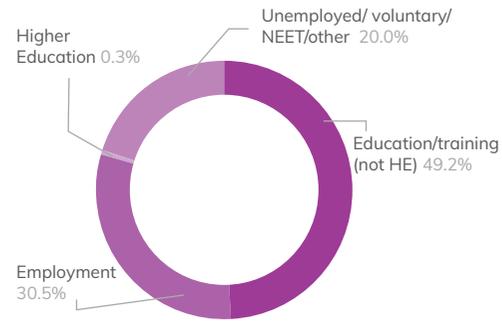


4.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

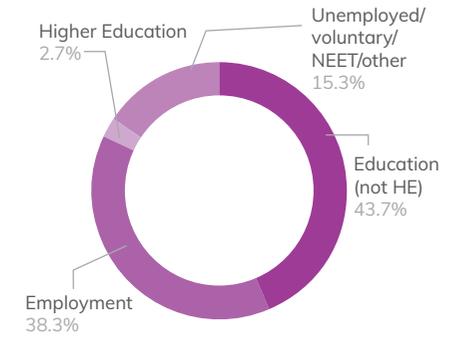
All levels



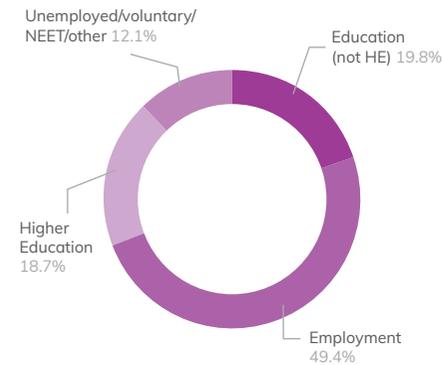
Level 1



Level 2



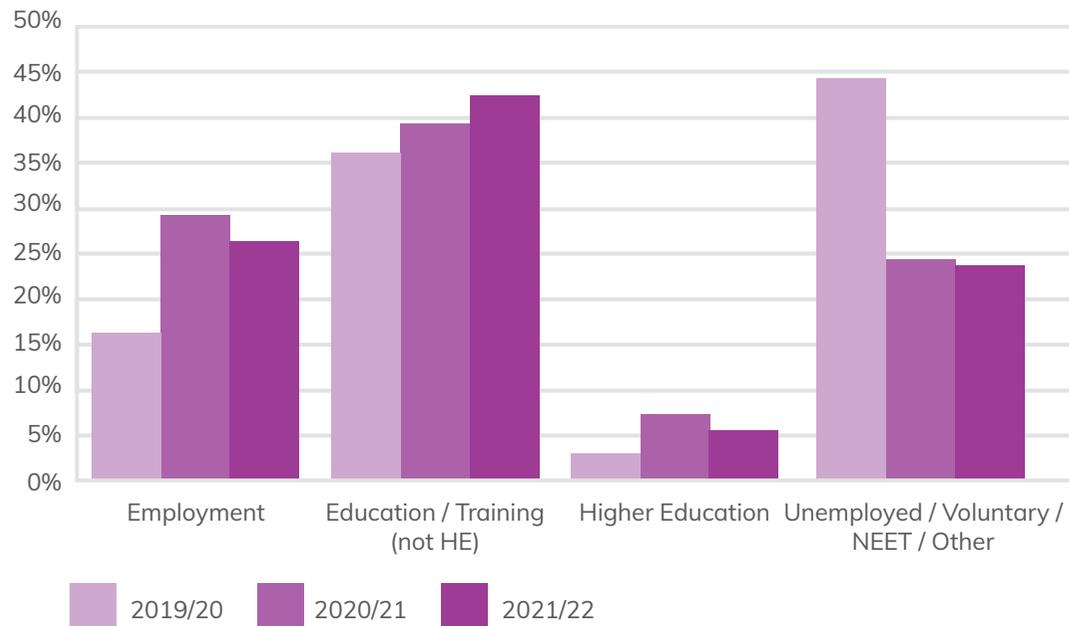
Level 3





4.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS CONTINUED

Destination of unemployed adults

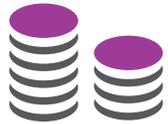


The destination data included in this report relates to leavers in academic year 2021/22. The college employs a permanent Destinations Officer to enable us to more proactively pursue learners who have left us in order to improve the tracking of our outcomes.

The destinations of adult learners studying level 3 programmes demonstrate 87.9% positive destinations. At level 2 this drops slightly to 84.7% and at entry and level 1 sits at 80.%.

Our SWAP provision has been particularly strong at moving significant numbers of unemployed learners into sustainable jobs – including 51 learners moving into Retail and Hospitality, 36 moving into Logistics and 22 moving into security jobs in the region. As a result, we continue to reduce the number of adults who are unemployed when they join us and remain unemployed when they leave us.





4.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

BREAKDOWN OF LEARNER TYPE

Our adult education provision can be broadly categorised into three strands:

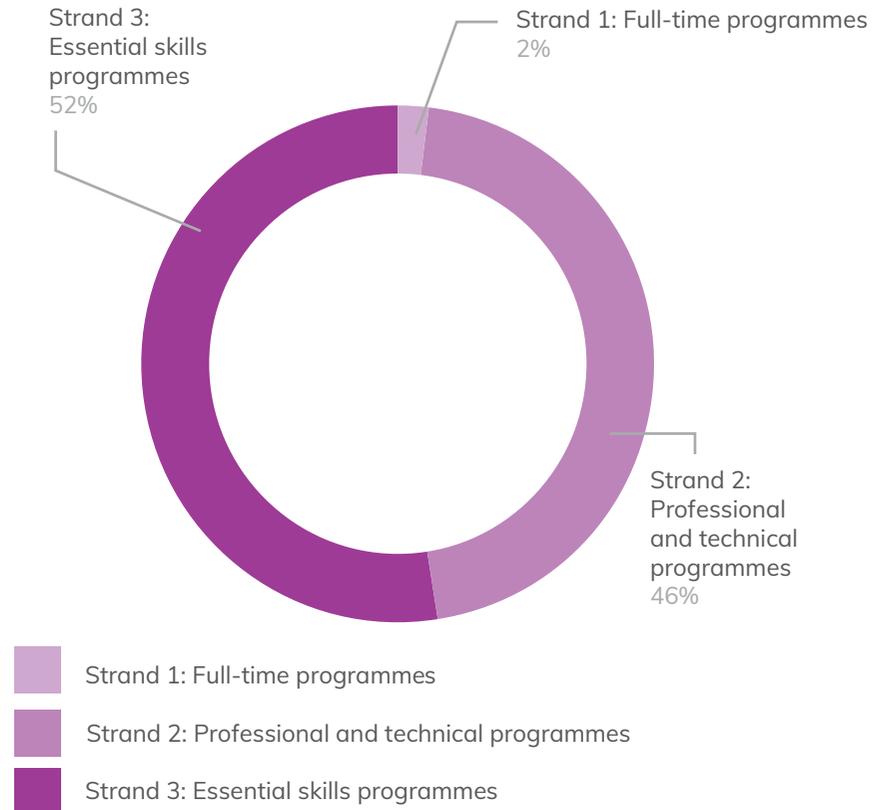
STRAND 1: YOUNG ADULTS COMPLETING FULL TIME PROGRAMMES. This provision is for a small group of learners usually aged between 19 and 21 years old who complete their full-time technical education programme alongside full time learners aged 16-18 years.

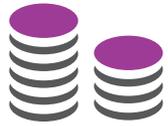
STRAND 2: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL UPDATING PROGRAMMES FOR ADULTS. These programmes will help adults develop skills for progression in their careers or for entry into higher education.

STRAND 3: ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES FOR ADULTS. These are programmes aimed at developing essential skills for adults to support them progressing in work and life.

The chart shows how our adult learners are split between these three strands. The table demonstrates a three-year trend in increasing the numbers of adult studying technical and professional programmes from 13% in 19/20, 45% in 21/22 and 46% in 2022/23 demonstrating our continued work to meet local and regional skills needs of adults in the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Adult learners by strand

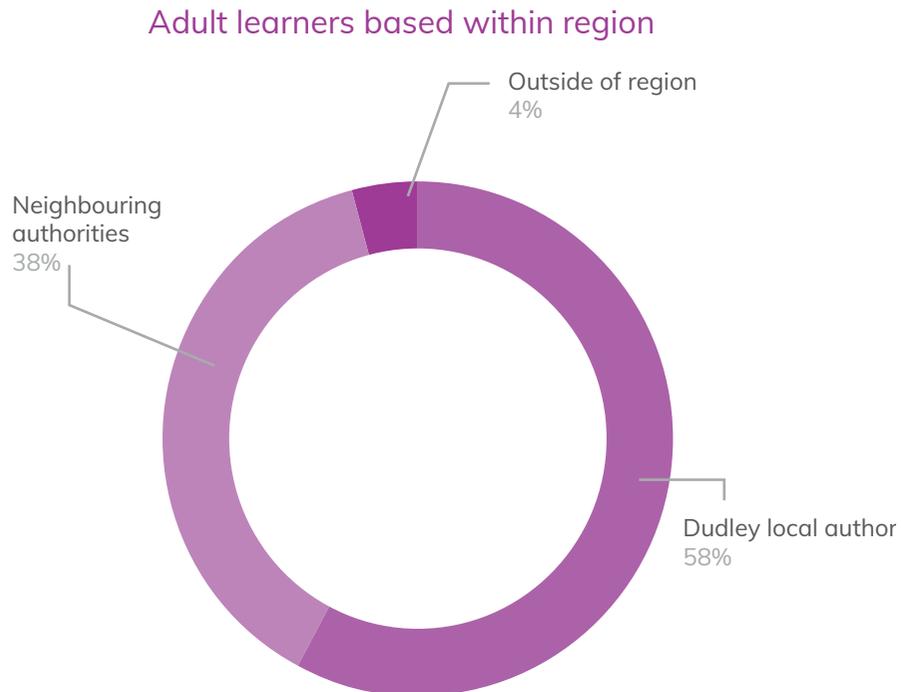




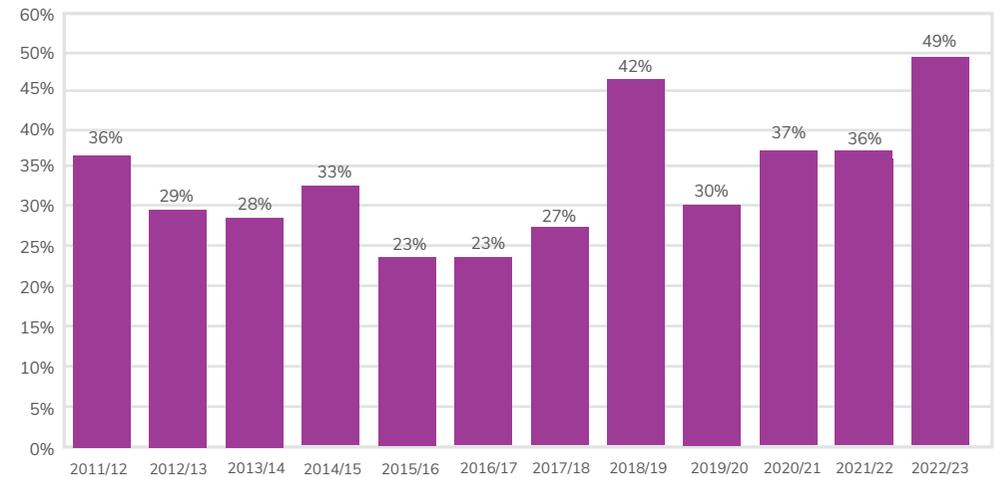
4.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTINUED

HAVING AN IMPACT LOCALLY

The chart below shows the proportion of our adult learners that reside in the Dudley Local Authority, in the neighbouring authorities (Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Sandwell & Walsall) and outside of the region. More than half of our adult learners live in the Dudley borough (57%). 98% of our adults are from Dudley or the neighbouring borough demonstrating the impact we are having locally.



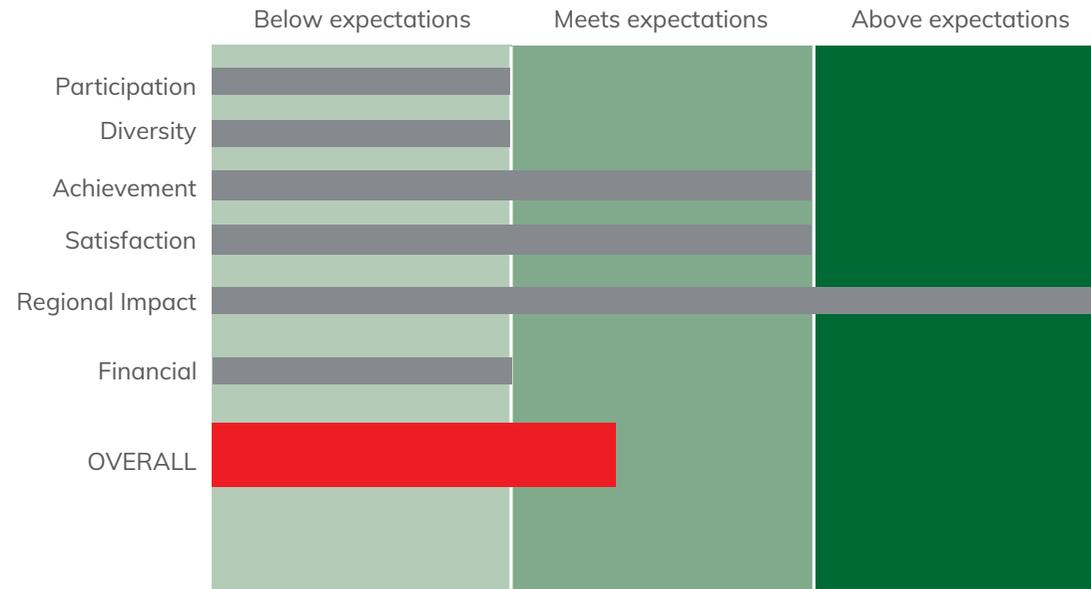
Adult Classroom % STEM



The local economy relies on a workforce with high level skills and skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

The chart above shows the percentage of qualifications completed by adult learners that were in STEM related subjects. In 2022/23, 49% of our adults followed STEM programmes of study, an increase of 13% drop compared to the previous year.

5. APPRENTICESHIPS AND WORK-BASED LEARNERS BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. Apprentices' retention has impacted the achievement rates within this provision which is mainly down to three reasons which are out of our control. We are aware of apprentices not completing on time, however, pass rates are high within this provision. The alignment of our provision to regional skills needs continue to be a strength.



SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

Overall recruitment is slightly down compared to 2021-22 levels, which is in line with the national picture. We have been reducing the subcontractor work within apprenticeships and this has continued to decrease as planned.

- We engaged 840 (841) young people in college-based apprenticeships, and 112 (174) young people via subcontractors.
- We engaged 1288 (1359) adults in college-based apprenticeships, and 115 (302) adults via subcontractors.
- In total we engaged 2386 (2662) individuals in apprenticeships.
- Pass rates for apprentices are high.
- Overall achievement rates apprenticeships have improved and are at 53.4% which is a modest improvement of 1.7%.
- There are no significant or sustained differences in the success rates of apprentices by gender although participation by females remains low.
- The college has successfully closed the gap in achievement for learners declaring a disability and those who do not.

We made an impact on the local skills gap by upskilling young people and adults (previous year in brackets):

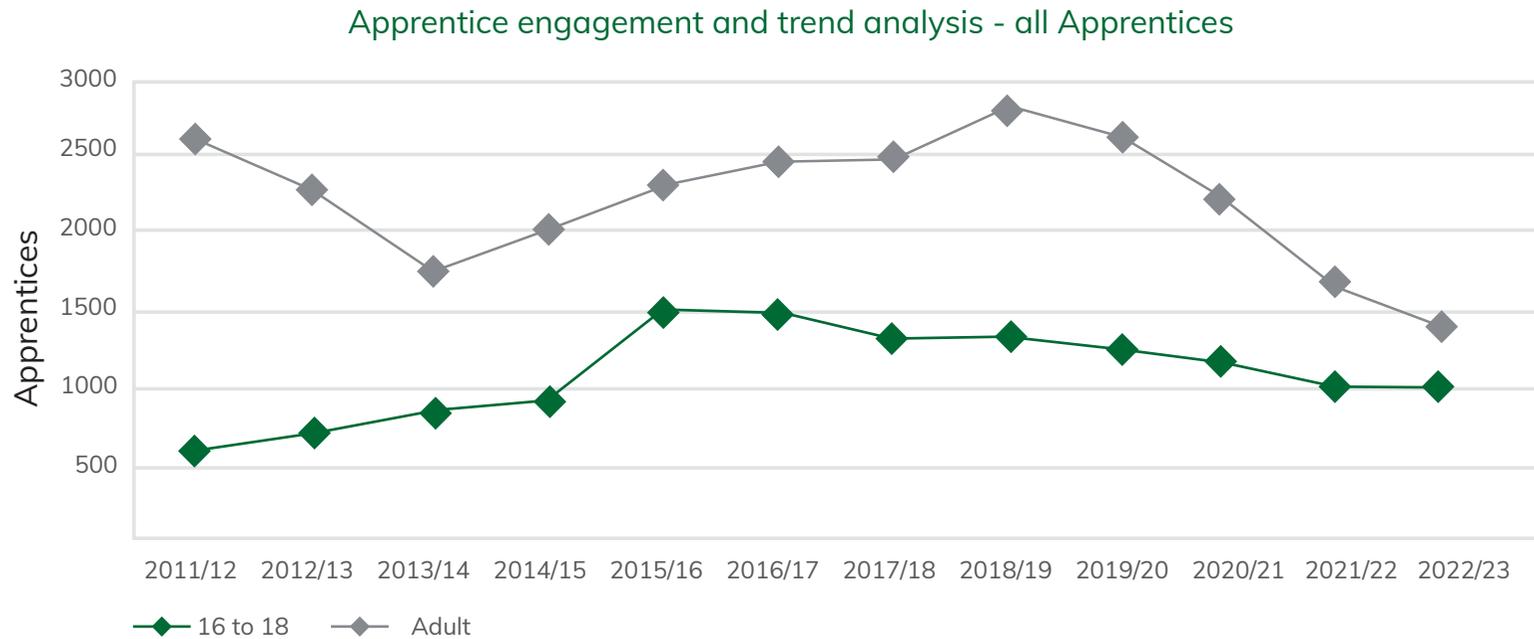
- 54% of apprentices were following STEM programmes of study which is a 2% increase from the previous year.

What better outputs could we achieve?

- Retention and achievements rates on advanced and higher apprenticeships.
- Narrow the achievement gap for Black, Mixed heritage and Asian apprentices.
- The number of apprentices completing their apprenticeship within the given duration (timely achievement).
- The use of starting points for apprentices at the beginning of their journey.
- Improve the engagement of employers with the apprenticeship in some areas.
- Improve the co-ordination of on-and-off-the-job training for some apprenticeships.
- The satisfaction levels of apprentices.



5.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES



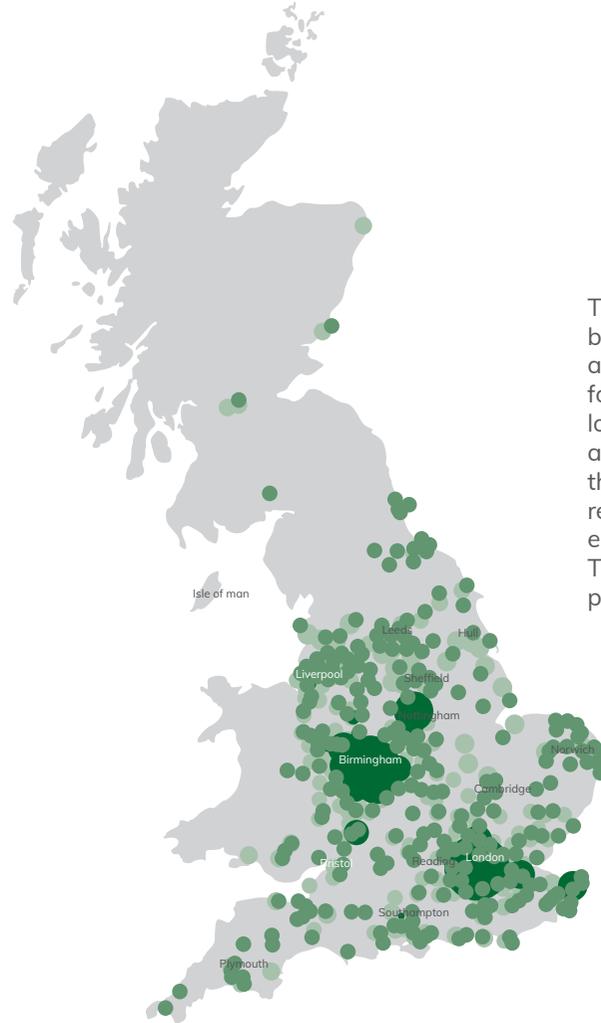
There has still been a decline in participation levels for apprentices. This has been seen nationally. We have continued to decrease the subcontracted apprenticeship provision and now only a small number of subcontractors remain. The participation for 16-18 apprentices was 952 in 2022/23 and the number of adult apprentices was 1403 in 2022/23.

In total, some 2,386 individuals undertook apprenticeship training with the college in 2022/23. The provision is supported by effective engagement with local employers and dedicated apprenticeship placement services offered by our Employment Hub and Employer Engagement Managers (EEMs).



5.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

Apprentice provision



The heat map shows the home location of college-based (exc. sub-contracted partnership activity) apprentices. The majority of 16-18 apprentices following a day release programme and are based locally in the West Midlands Region. The adult apprenticeships are also based locally however there are pockets of focussed activity in other regions due to specific initiatives with key partner employers including national NHS Trusts and Tesco. This can include delivery of bespoke apprenticeship programmes on employer premises.



5.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In 2022/23 the participation rates between male and female have remained similar to previous years, males 70% (69%) and females 30% (31%).

We continue to work with schools to drive up female engagement in STEM careers, supported by the introduction of the Institute of Technology.

There is no significant difference in achievement between male and female apprentices.

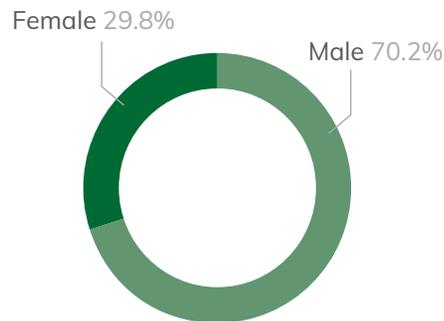
Our BAME apprenticeship participation profile is broadly representative of the communities we serve and remains the same as the previous year 12% but lower than other College student cohorts such as classroom-based provision. We are currently working with West Midland Colleges on a workstream around recruitment of BAME apprentices.

There continue to be some significant differences in the achievement rates of Asian (-10%), Black (-31.8%) and Mixed heritage (-13.4%) apprentices. The college will continue work hard to ensure intervention is in place to narrow the gap of achievement for these apprentices.

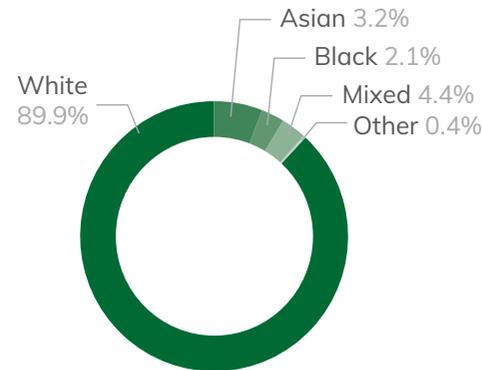
We were pleased to support 283 apprentices who declare a special education need or disability (SEND) in 2022/23, which is 12% which is marginally higher on the previous year at 10% of all apprentices. We deliver support to these apprentices using a dedicated apprenticeship support team. We have continued to focus on ensuring this support programme meets individual needs and have introduced a new initial assessment process to assist with this moving forwards.

Apprentices with a declared SEND achieve at a slightly lower rate than their peers -1.4%. this gap has been closed compared to last year which saw a 6% difference. The college will continue to use support systems to close the gap in achievement seen this year.

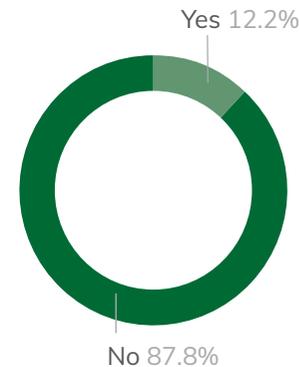
Gender mix



Ethnicity mix



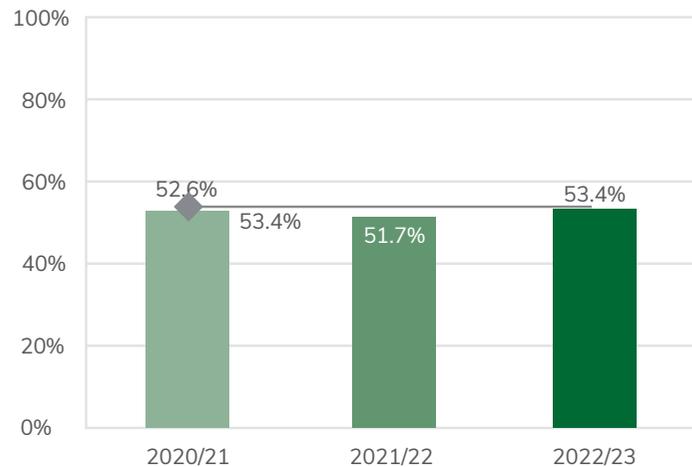
Learning difficulty or disability





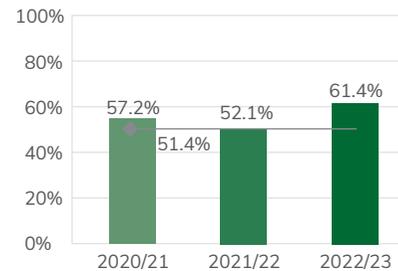
5.3 OUTCOMES FOR APPRENTICES

Overall achievement rate - all Apprenticeships

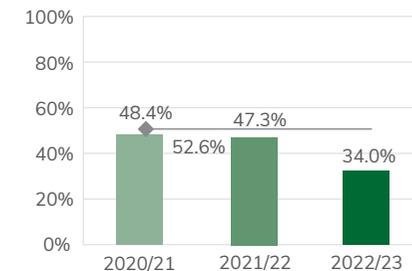


■ College achievement rate
◆ Latest published national achievement rate (2018/19)

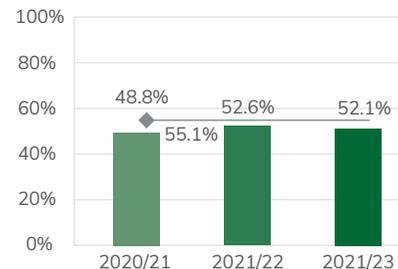
Intermediate Apprenticeships



Higher Apprenticeships



Advanced Apprenticeships



Overall achievement rates for apprenticeships have slightly increased from the previous year 53.4% (+1.7%). The biggest increase is seen at intermediate level. Retention is the biggest factor affecting achievement rates. Most commonly due to changes in employment status. Top three withdrawal reasons are 'Personal: I gained employment/job change', 'Loss of job/Unemployed' and 'Redundancy (with official employer evidence)'. Even removing just these apprentices from data shows the significant impact on achievement.

Note – Latest published national rates are only available from 2018-19 due to pandemic.



5.3 OUTCOMES FOR APPRENTICES CONTINUED

Hybrid end year	Ach%	Ret%
2020/21	66.7% (52.5%)	68.0% (54.0%)
2021/22	70.1% (51.7%)	70.9% (52.4%)
2022/23	69.8% (53.4%)	70.6% (52.0%)

Unaltered rates are shown in parentheses.

Apprenticeship Pass Rates

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22 nat. rate
16-18	98.8%	97.1%	99.4%	97.2%
19-23	99.3%	99.5%	98.1%	97.6%
24+	96.5%	99.6%	98.9%	97.7%
All ages	98.1%	98.9%	98.8%	97.5%

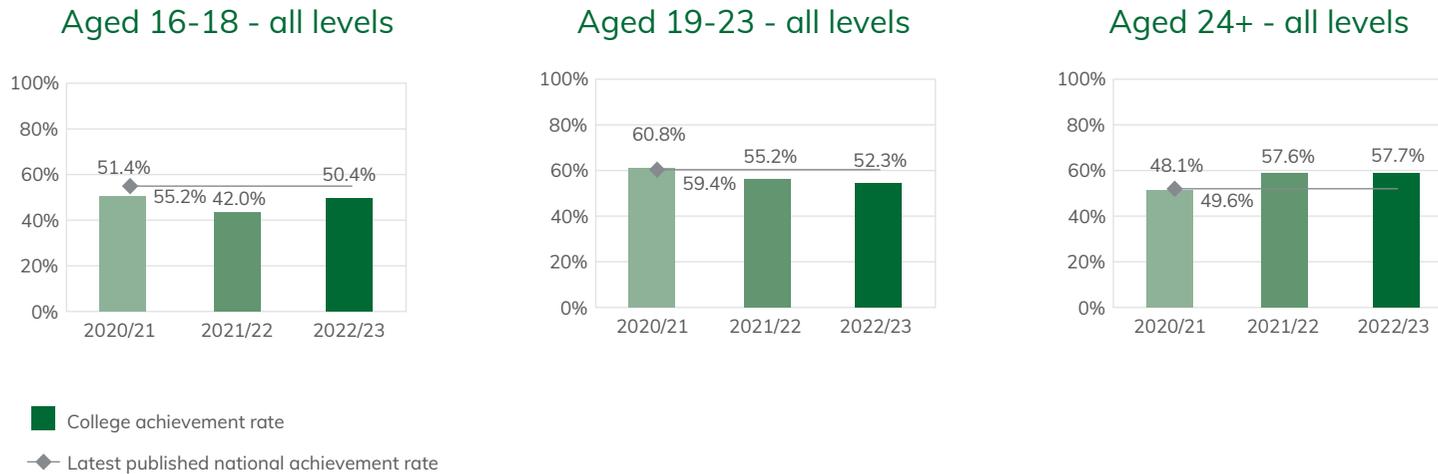
Pass rates for apprentices remain very high across apprenticeship provision.

Whilst we are aware we need to improve the number of apprentices completing within the given duration we can report that 98% of apprentices who go beyond end date do pass.



5.3 OUTCOMES FOR APPRENTICES CONTINUED

AGE GROUP ACHIEVEMENT

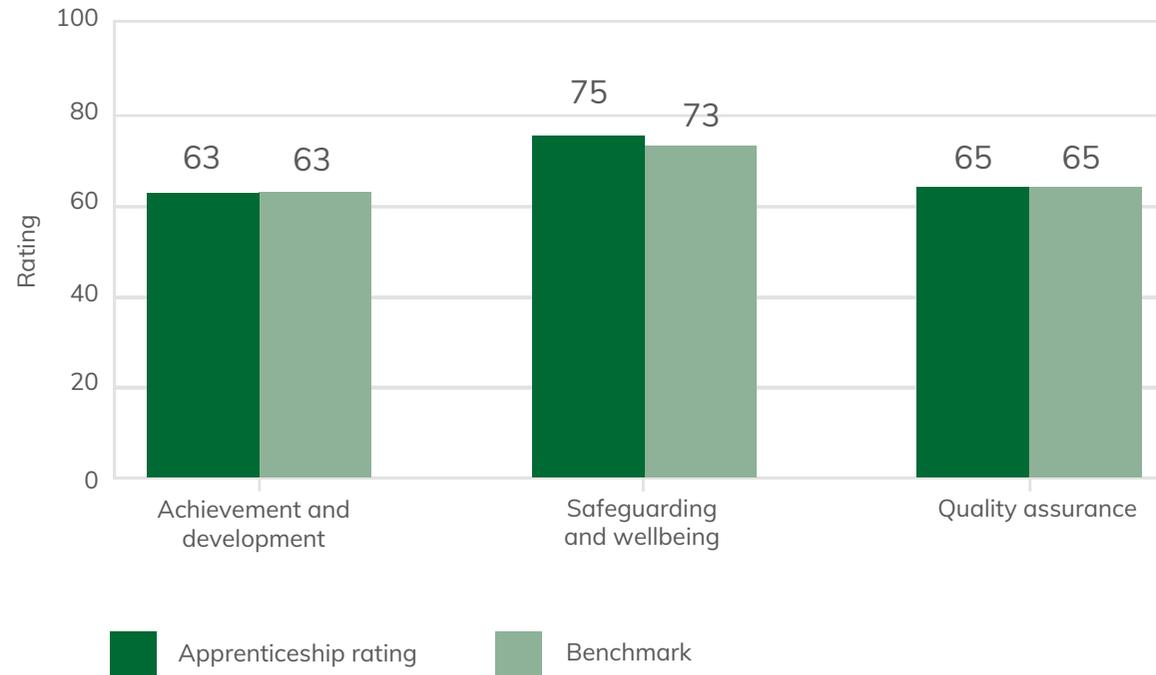


Analysis by age group shows underperformance in 16-18 and 19-23 age groups although a slight improvement in 16-18 compared to last year (+8.4%), 24+ has remained the same. We are committed to growing high value-added college-delivered apprenticeships where local and regional needs exist.



5.4 LEARNER AND EMPLOYER SATISFACTION

Apprenticeship End of Year Survey



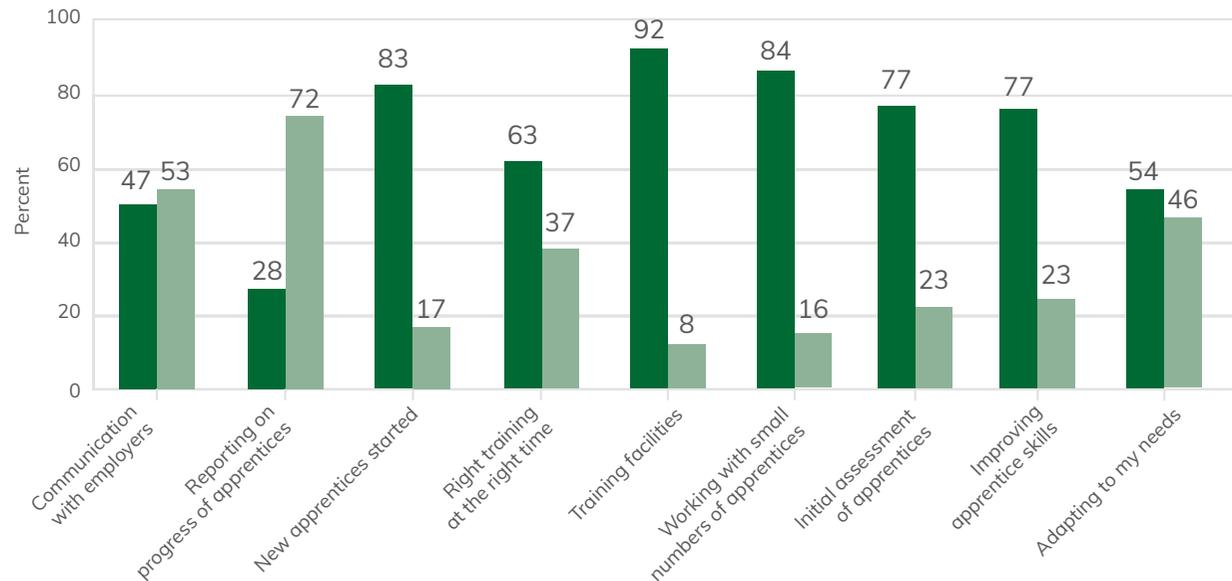
The satisfaction of apprentices is in line with the benchmark. The college will continue to focus on improving the apprenticeship experience.



5.4 LEARNER AND EMPLOYER SATISFACTION CONTINUED

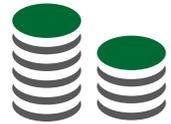
 Percentage of employers that selected this as a 'strength'

 Percentage of employers that selected this as needs improvement



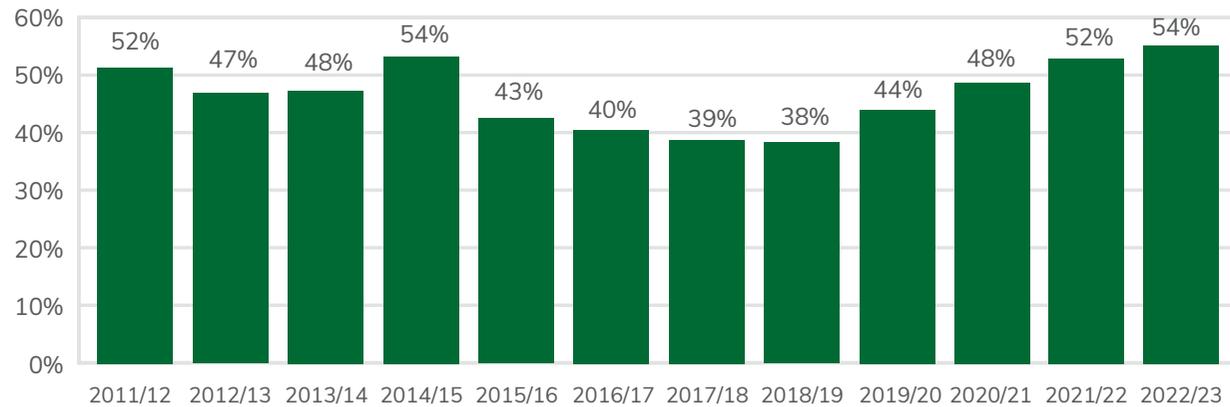
Employer reviews
★★★★☆ Good (436 reviews)

Data is taken from the latest published information on Government 'Find an apprenticeship' service. Despite the clear challenges, employers and apprentices remain generally pleased with the service Dudley College offer.



5.5 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

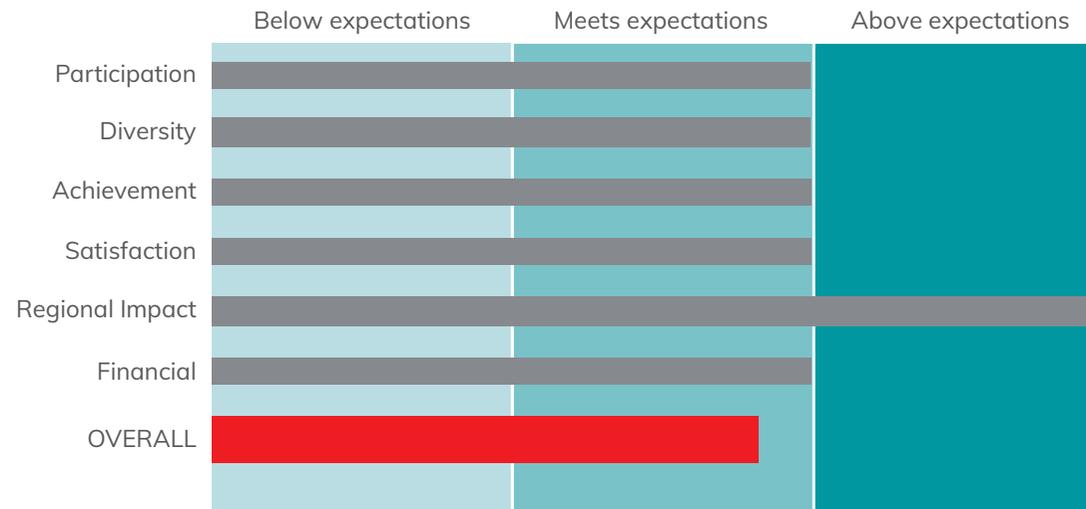
STEM Apprenticeships - trend analysis



The local Black Country and wider West Midlands economy relies on a workforce with high level skills including in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The charts above show the percentage of apprenticeship standards completed by apprentices in STEM related subjects. 54% (+2%) of all apprentices followed STEM programmes of study. We are committed to continuing to grow college-delivered and high-value partnership STEM apprenticeship provision, enhanced by the introduction of the Institute of Technology.



6. HIGHER SKILLS LEARNERS BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. Our focus going forward will be to continue to expand the range of programmes at higher level by offering non-traditional routes to HE, delivered from the Institute of Technology and in partnership with regional Universities. We are looking to increase the number of students progressing from feeder programmes to the College's HE provision, particularly through the College's involvement in the Aspire to HE project initiative.



SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

What key outputs did we achieve?

We continued to support local participation in higher skills learning (21/22):

- We engaged 410 adults in higher level classroom based and HNC/D programmes across a range of subjects that support local skills needs, a further increase on the previous year;
- Additionally, we also engaged 290 adults in Higher Apprenticeships in 2021/22, again increasing on the previous year.
- The Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IoT) had a successful second year of operation, significantly expanding the range of higher-level courses available to local communities.

We successfully engaged students from diverse communities:

- 22% of HE students were from BAME groups. Our HE students are more diverse than the local community where 11.9% of the population are from BAME categories.
- Increasing levels of engagement among female students in areas that are traditionally male-dominated, such as manufacturing and construction.

We continued to ensure higher skills students successfully achieved their programme of study and achievement rates remain consistent with previous academic years.

- The overall achievement rate remains high and broadly consistent with previous academic years.
- High levels of student satisfaction.

We made an impact on the local skills gap and supported WMCA priorities by upskilling adults at a higher-level, enhanced by the opening of the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology:

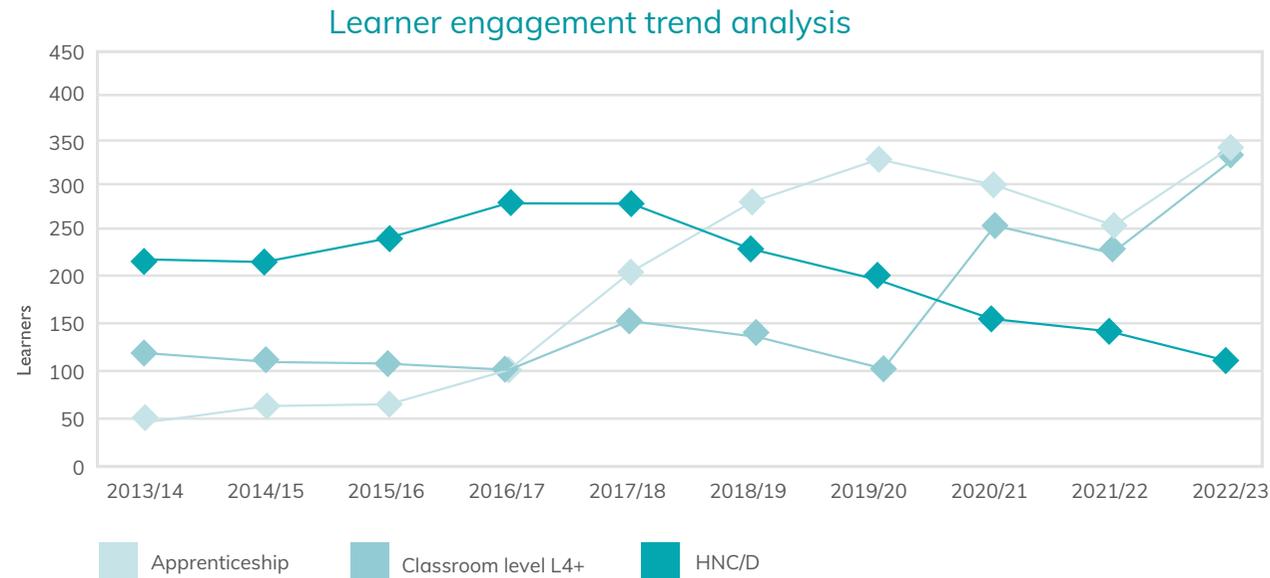
- The local economy relies on a workforce with high level education and skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). With the opening of the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology and the related launch of new STEM-related programmes such as Healthcare Science, we have seen a significant increase in enrolments in these subjects. We remain committed to further expanding our higher-level STEM provision in higher apprenticeships through the expansion of our Science and Healthcare provision and the ongoing work of the Institute of Technology.

What better outputs could we achieve?

- The number of students on higher level students able to access provision made available through partnership with local Higher Education Institutions.
- The breadth of our HE apprenticeship provision goes from strength to strength, but we are targeting some new provision in 2023/24 linked to the newly-available HTQ programmes.



6.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES



In 2022/23 we had 410 students undertaking higher level learning through classroom based and HNC/D programmes. The numbers on traditional stand-alone HNC/D programmes have continued to decline from a high point in 2017. The impact of this was more than offset by the continuing use of West Midlands Combined Authority flexibilities for HE programmes and the opening of the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology. Meaning overall student numbers have increased compared to the previous year.

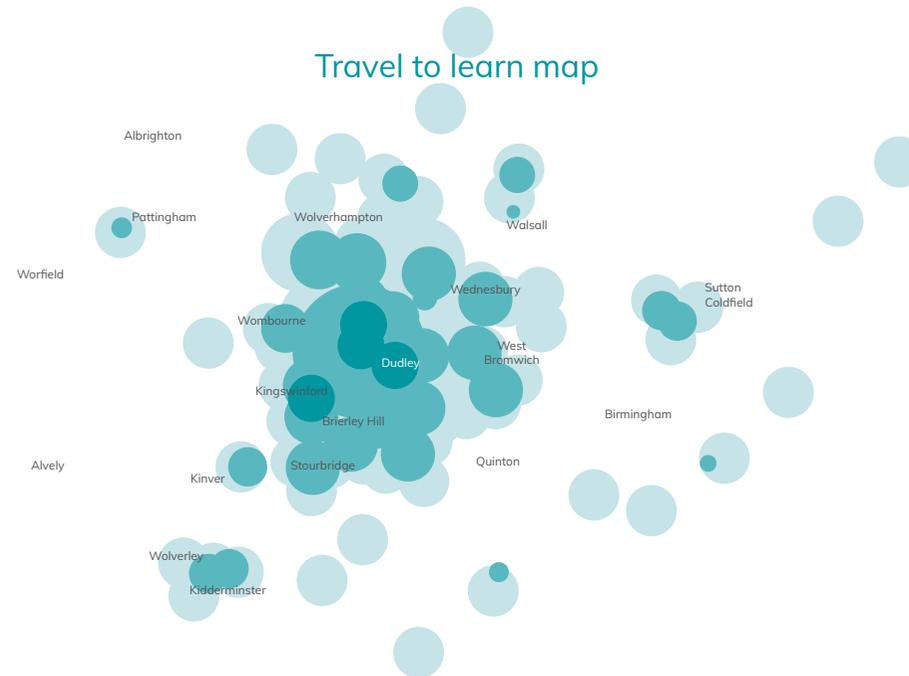
Higher Apprenticeship recruitment also increased compared to the previous year to 390 in 2022-23. These students continue to be a strategic priority for the college, and we have plans to further expand our HE apprenticeship offer, particularly through the ongoing work of the Institute of Technology and Higher Educational partners.

The College considers higher skills learners as:

1. HNC/D students – those studying dedicated HE programmes on a full or part time basis.
2. Classroom based Level 4+ students – adults studying FE provision that is level 4 or higher
– including professional programmes such as Teacher Training.
3. Higher Apprenticeships- those studying at level 4 and above through an Apprenticeship programme.



6.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED



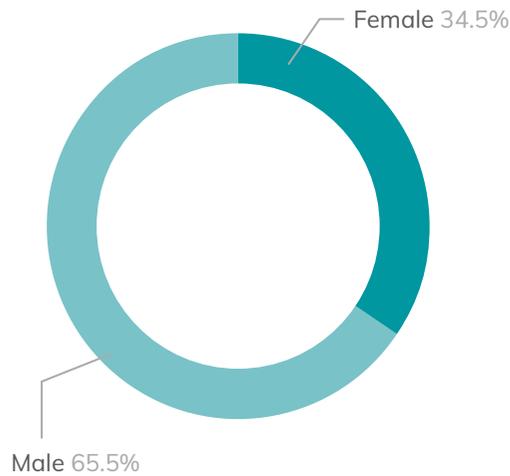
The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our Higher Education students in 2022-23. The majority of students continue to be from Dudley Borough and the wider Black Country area. Increasingly students are looking to remain in locally to study rather than travel elsewhere.

However, it also shows that the college is attracting higher level students from across the wider West Midlands, and we expect that to broaden as the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology continues to establish itself and as we participate in the Aspire to HE project. We are pleased to see that, as we strengthen our higher-level offer and build our reputation for quality delivery of learning and skills, we are able to draw students from farther afield, with the Institute of Technology giving us a national reach in some sectors.

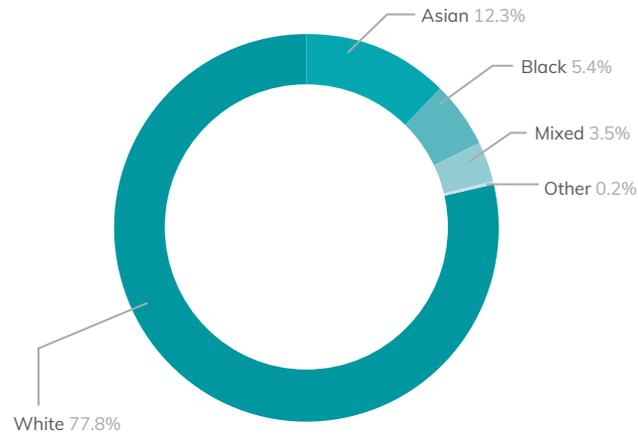


6.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

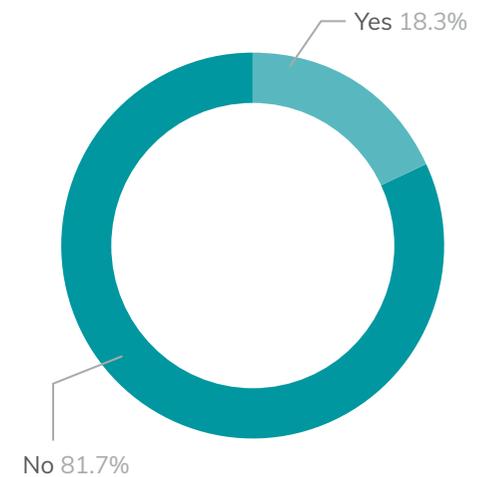
Gender



Ethnicity



Learning difficulty or disability



Males remain the biggest cohort on Higher Education programmes, with this percentage increasing in 2022-23. We continue to encourage more female students to pursue higher technical skills, particularly in areas such as engineering, manufacturing and construction. But more work needs to be done to increase female participation in higher level study.

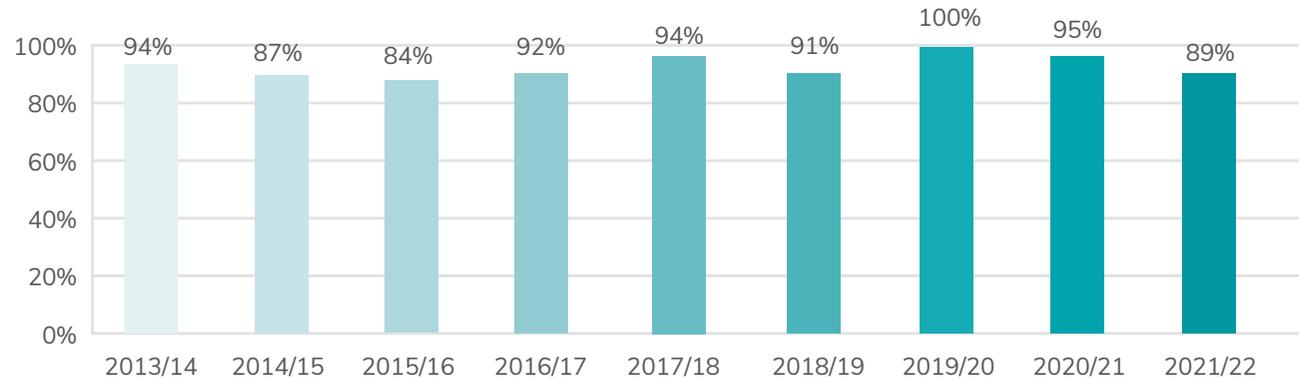
Their ethnicity profile shows our higher-level students as a group are more diverse than the local community. 22.4% of our HE students are from BAME groups compared to 11.9% of the local population.

We were pleased to support nearly 18% of higher-level students who have a self-declared learning difficulties or disabilities in 2022/23, a slight increase from 2020-21. We are happy to report that these students achieved at a rate comparable to their peers.



6.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Higher Achievement Rate (Completers)

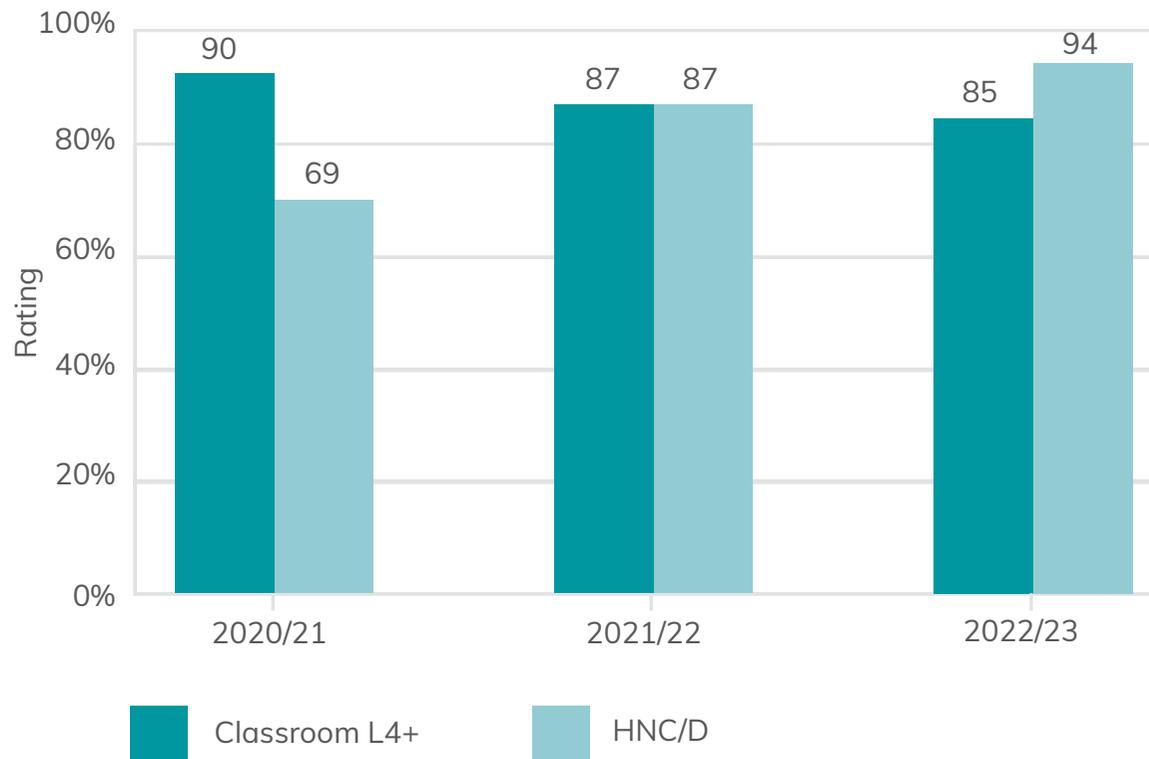


The overall achievement rate remains broadly consistent with previous academic years, with a notable improvement in HNC/D performance.



6.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

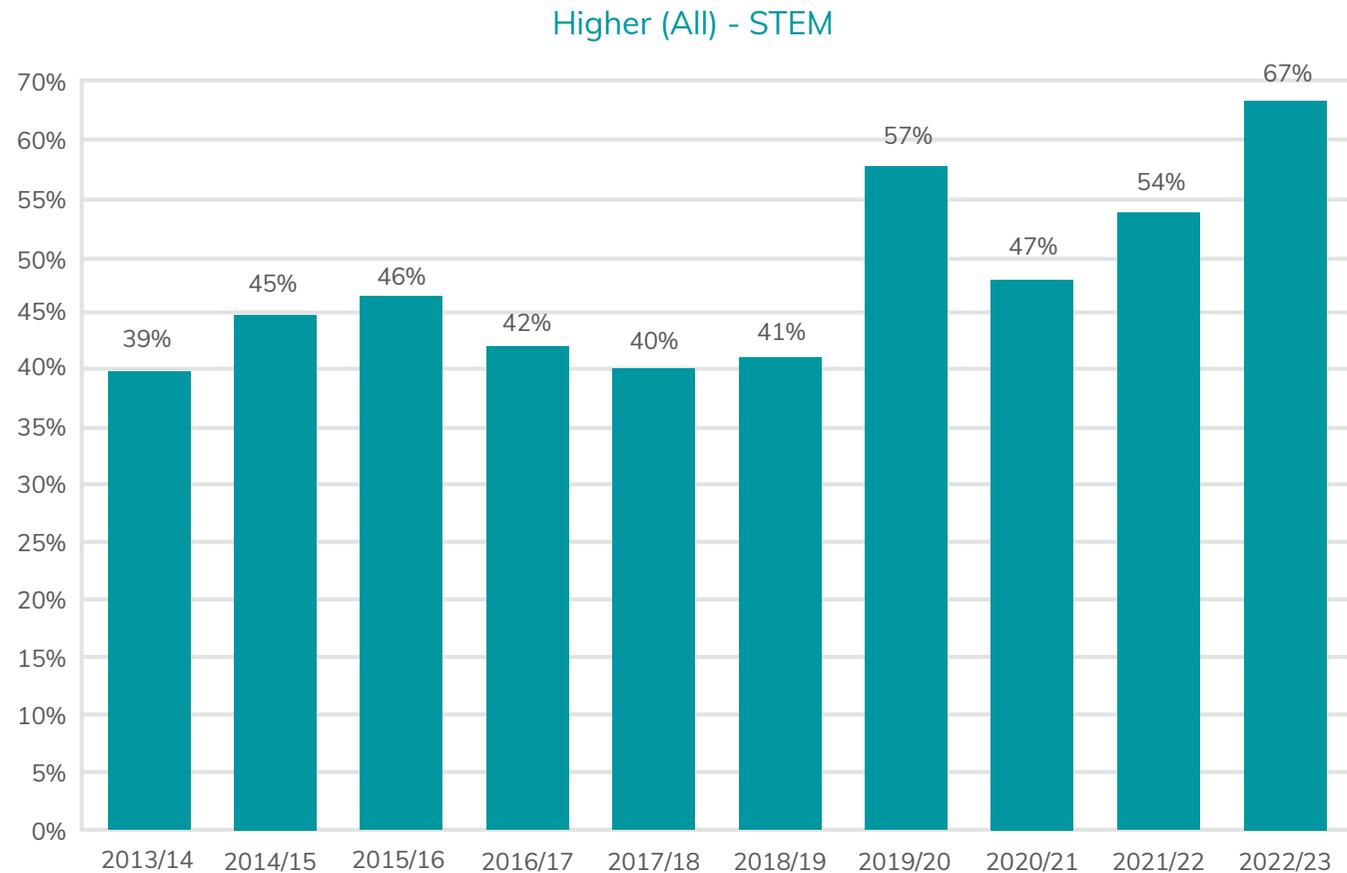
End of year Learner satisfaction (QDP survey)



Higher-level students remain pleased with the service Dudley College offer. With overall satisfaction being above the national comparative benchmark.



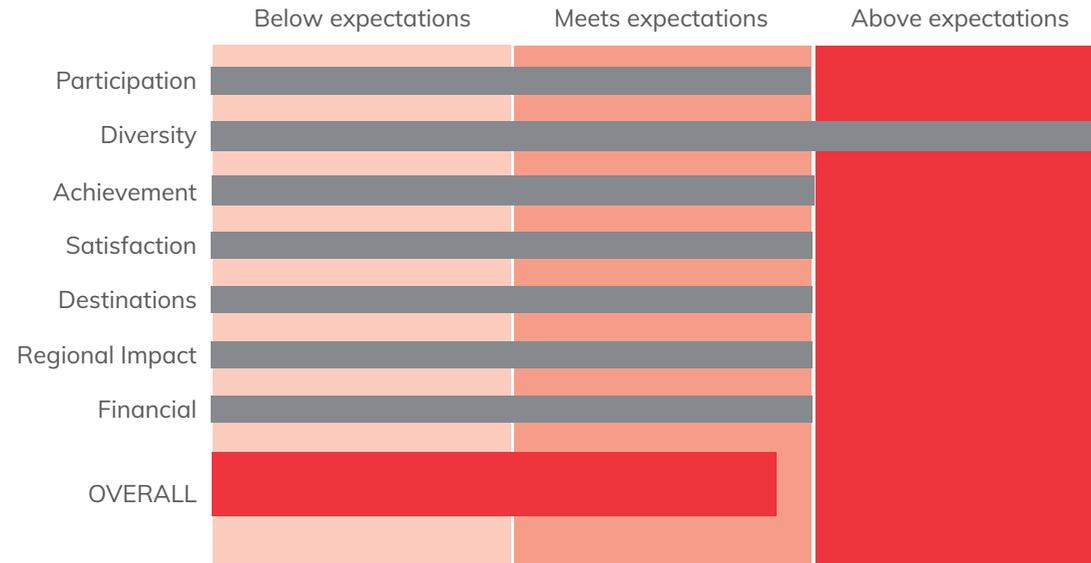
6.5 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY



The local economy relies on a workforce with high level education and skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). With the opening of the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology and the related launch of new STEM-related programmes such as Healthcare Science, we have seen a significant increase in enrolments in these subjects. We remain committed to further expanding our higher-level STEM provision in higher apprenticeships through the expansion of our Science and Healthcare provision and the ongoing work of the Institute of Technology.

7. HIGH NEEDS LEARNERS

BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'meets expectations'. We are very proud of the diverse student body who achieve at least as well as their peers, as well as the very high satisfaction we have for these programmes. Our focus going forward is to continue to expand opportunities for more high needs learners to transition into the workplace for the benefit of them and the region.



SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

What key outputs did we achieve?

We continue to maintain high levels of participation of high needs Learners

- 179 learners were supported through high needs funding in 22/23.
- The number of high needs learners studying at Level 2 increased by 15 in 22/23.

We are supporting high needs learners to ensure that they achieve as well as their peers

- Overall achievement rates for learners show that those learners receiving high needs funding achieved slightly better than their peers (+1.4%).
- The gap in achievement rates for English and maths, for those with high needs compared to their peers closed significantly from -16% in 21/22 to 5% in 22/23.
- 37.3% of learners receiving high needs funding are studying STEM subjects, a continued increase on the previous 2 years.

We successfully engaged high needs learners from diverse communities

- 21.6% high needs funded learners were from ethnic minority groups in 22/23, with the local population being 11.5% from ethnic minorities.

We continue to support high needs learners to progress into the next level of study and into positive destinations

- 57.6% of high need learners progress onto the next level of qualification
- 82.6% of learners receiving high needs funding remained in education or gained employment.

We provide a positive experience for young people with High Needs

- 96% of learners receiving high needs funding agree this is a good college.
- Learners receiving high needs funding demonstrate satisfaction above national benchmark for achievement and development, safeguarding and well-being, support with next steps and quality assurance.

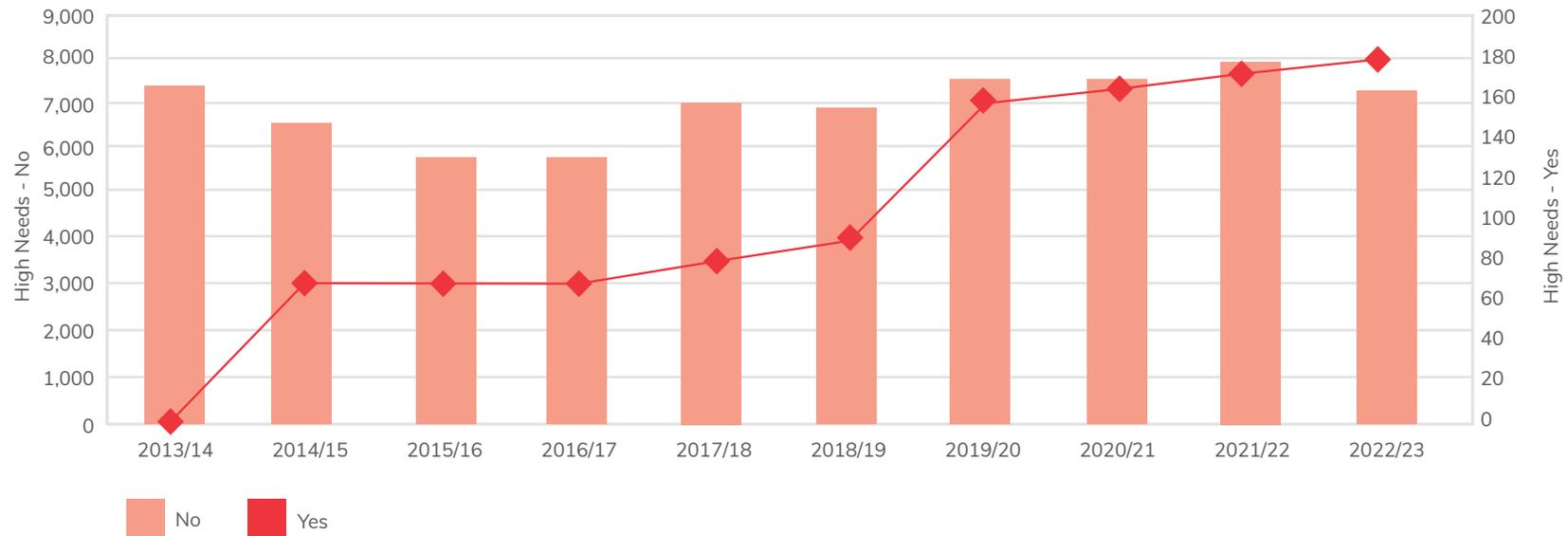
What better outputs could we achieve?

- We will restructure English and maths provision, in our discrete provision, to further close the gap in achievement for high needs learners compared to their peers
- We will work to increase the percentage of high needs learners moving onto their next level of study.



7.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

High Needs Classroom Trend





7.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

High Needs Classroom Trend

Headline numbers as part of overall College cohort

	High Needs	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
E&T	Yes	165	173	179
	No	7,397	7,806	7,399
Total		7,562	7,979	7,578

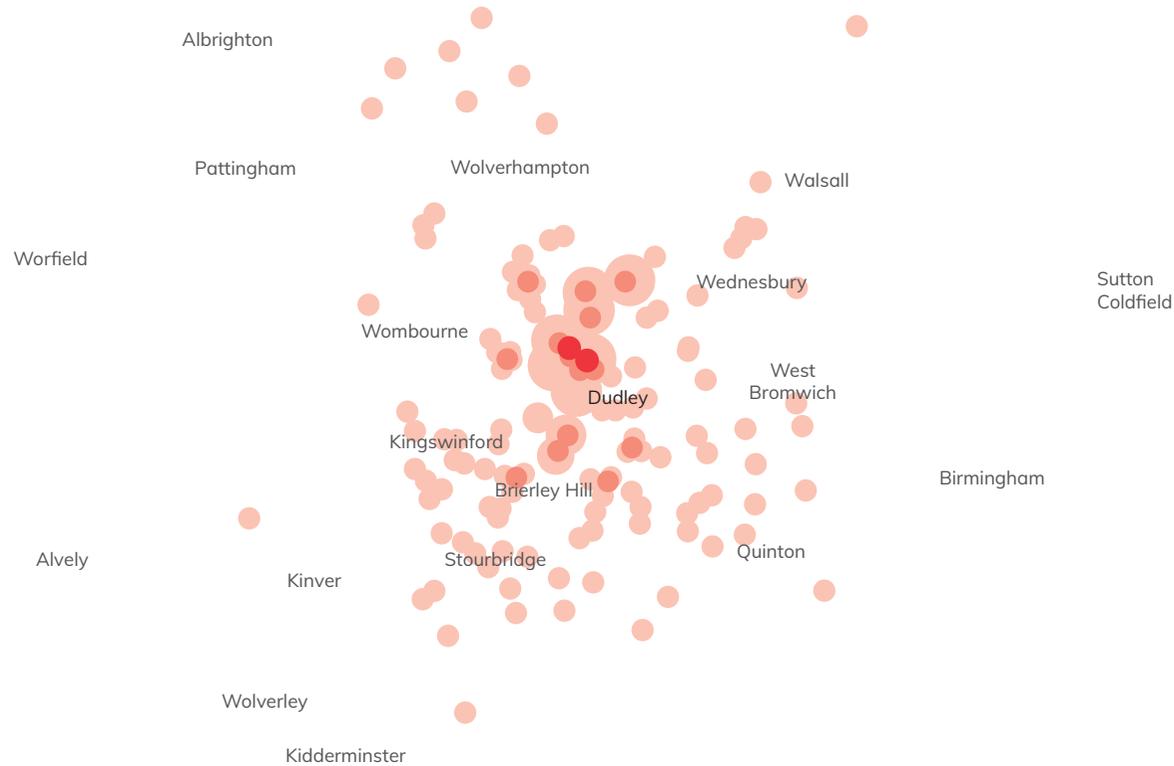
By Level

Level	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
High Needs						
Entry	65	667	76	825	63	672
1	28	883	29	778	27	786
2	44	2,300	45	2,351	60	2,202
3	28	3,174	23	3,582	29	3,282
4+	0	146	0	193	0	247
x	0	227	0	77	0	210

The number of high needs enrolments remains consistent in 22/23, compared to other years. This confirms the high level of confidence in the local community and from Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, who commission places with Dudley College of Technology.



7.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED



The map shows the travel to learn pattern for our High Needs learners in 2022/23. Most learners are from Dudley borough, as would be expected, with learners also travelling from Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Walsall, Birmingham, Staffordshire and Worcestershire. Our highly equipped and specialist estate across the Dudley and Brierley Hill learning quarters continue to provide the resources and support for high needs learners that enables them to achieve, in line with their peers.



7.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



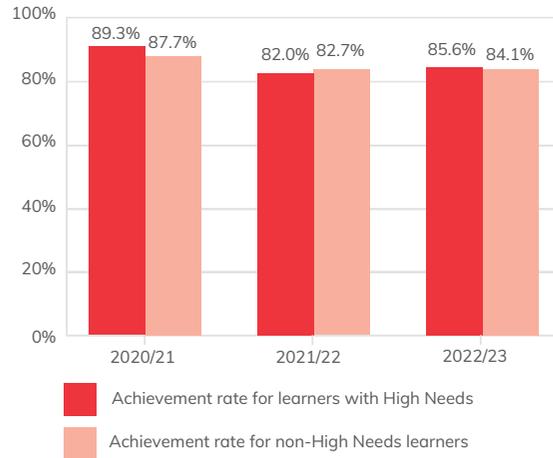
For high needs learners there are more male learners than female, however, this reflects the overall male/female split within the wider College. We continue to support a diverse cohort of learners with 21.6% of high needs learners being from minority groups, with the local population of minority ethnic groups being 11.9%. Overall achievement rates across ethnicity and gender shows no significant gaps.



7.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Achievement rates - all programmes excluding English & mathematics

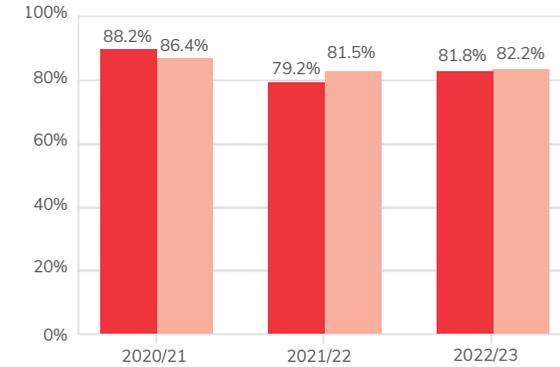
Overall achievement rate (all levels)
compared to wider College



High needs achievement rate
Level 1

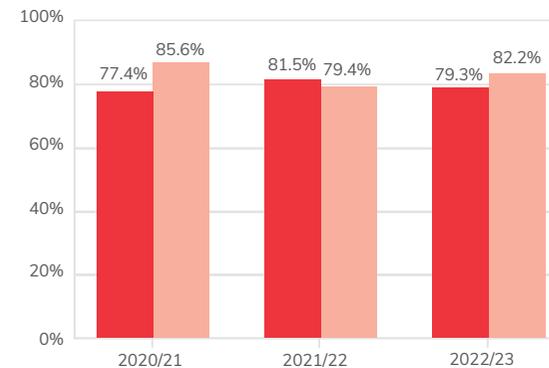


High needs achievement rate
Level 2



Achievement rates for 22/23 show an overall increase of 3.6% for high needs learners compared to 21/22, with an increase in Level 1 by 4.9% and Level 2 by 2.6%. Level 3 decreased by 2.2%, which was mainly impacted by retention issues, due to ill health. Learners achieve and make good progress, which is seen by the increase in enrolments of high needs learners on Level 2 and 3 courses in 22/23.

High needs achievement rate
Level 3

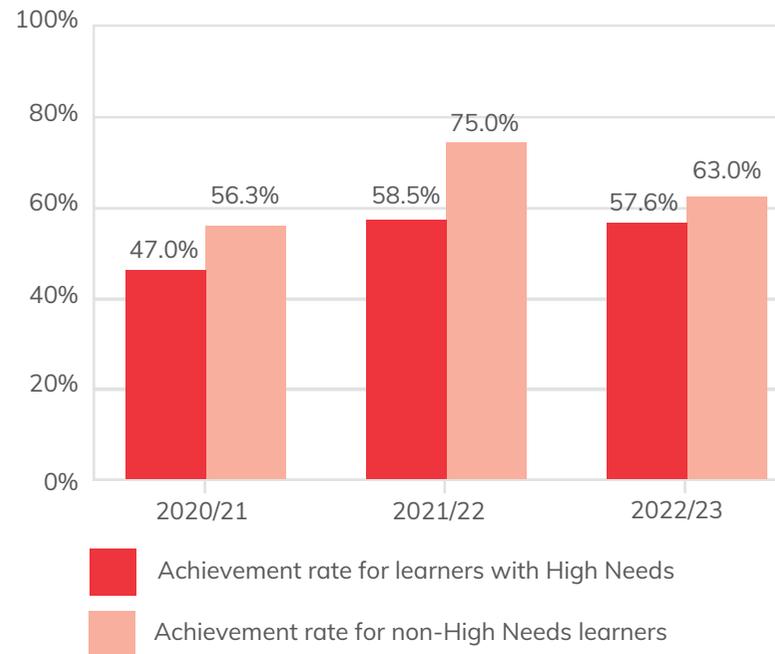




7.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

GCSE & Functional skills English & mathematics achievement rate – all levels

Overall achievement rate (all levels)
compared to wider College



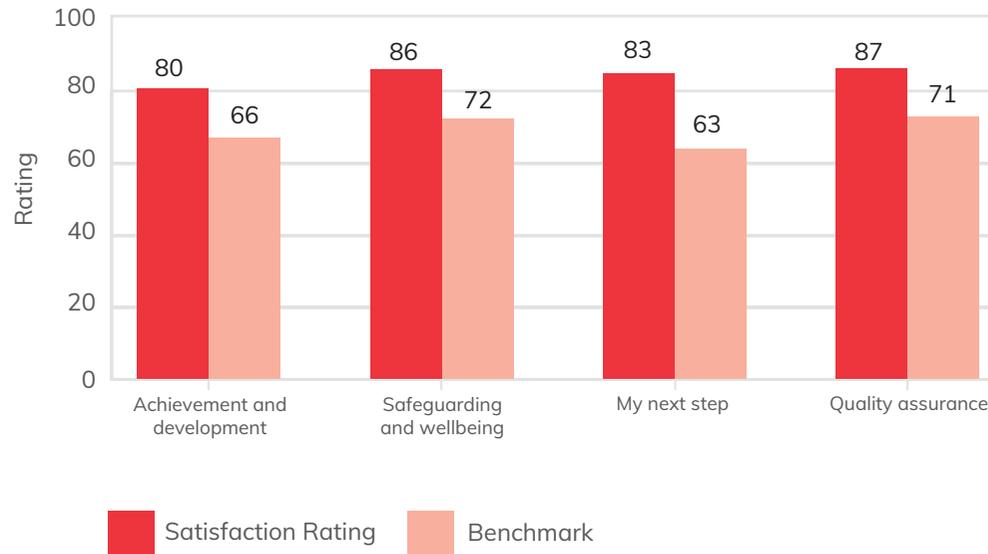
In 22/23 the gap in English and maths achievement rates for those with high needs closed significantly compared to 21/22 results. Work will continue in 23/24 to ensure the English and maths programmes for learners receiving high needs funding meets their individual needs.





7.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

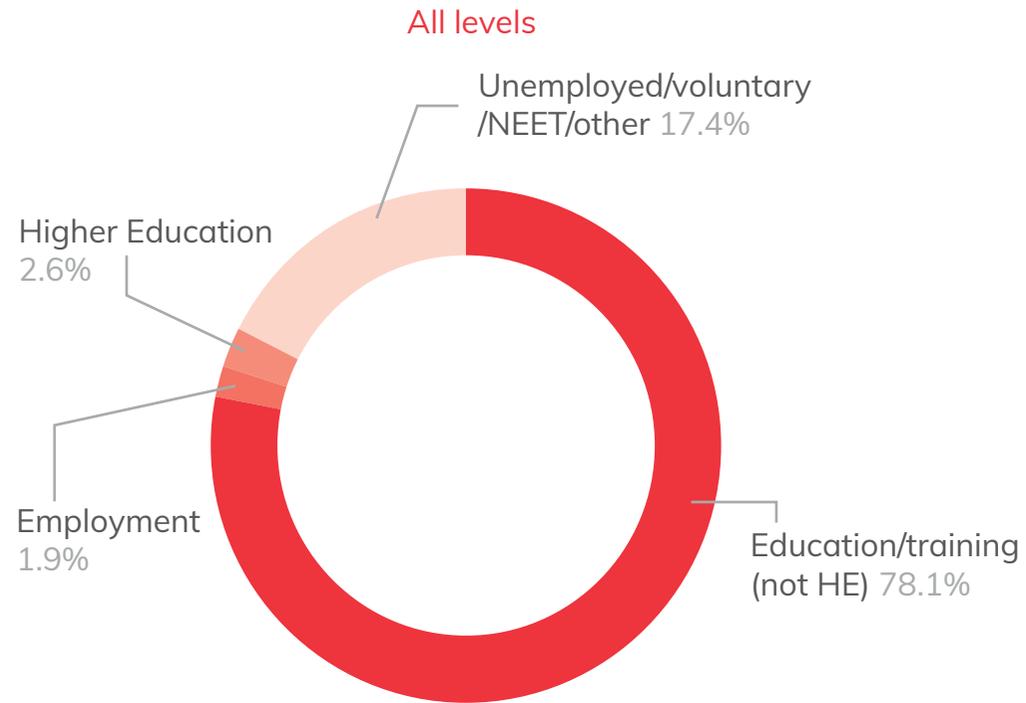
High Needs Learner Satisfaction (QDP survey)



We conduct surveys each year to understand learners' satisfaction with their programme of study and the wider college. Their feedback informs subject impact assessment reviews and quality improvement plans. The college employs an external agency, QDP, to conduct surveys and to benchmark the results against 54 general FE and tertiary colleges. The survey in 22/23 shows that high needs learners are very satisfied and show that Dudley College is performing significantly above national benchmark for learner satisfaction with high needs learners.



7.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

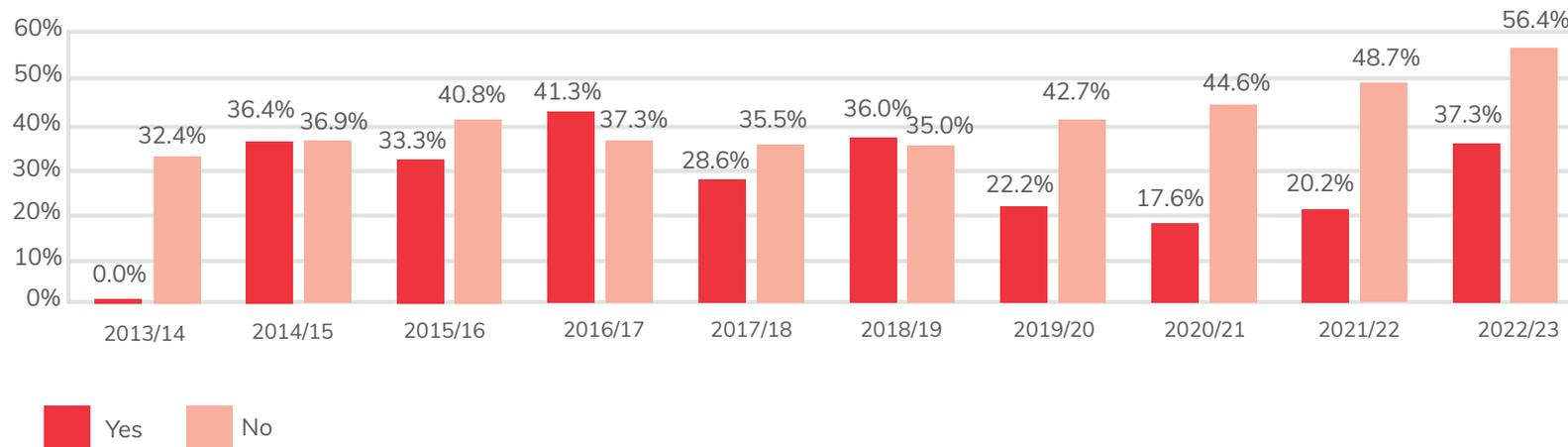


We successfully support many of our high needs students into positive destinations, with the majority, 78.1%, going onto further education and training. 29.% into higher education and 1.9% into work. Of the remaining 17.4% many go into voluntary work or adult social care which based on their starting points is a positive destination.



7.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

STEM in the curriculum – trend analysis

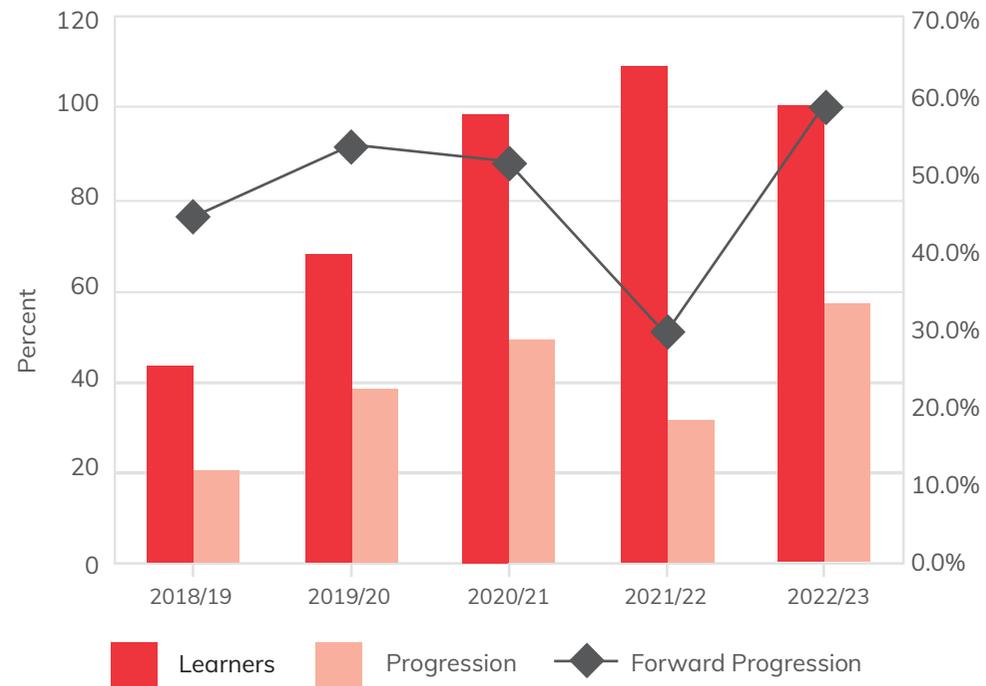


In 22/23 there were more high needs learners enrolled onto STEM programme than ever before and a significant increase of 17.1% compared to 21/22. This demonstrates our ongoing focus on ensuring high needs learners access the STEM curriculum, alongside their peers.

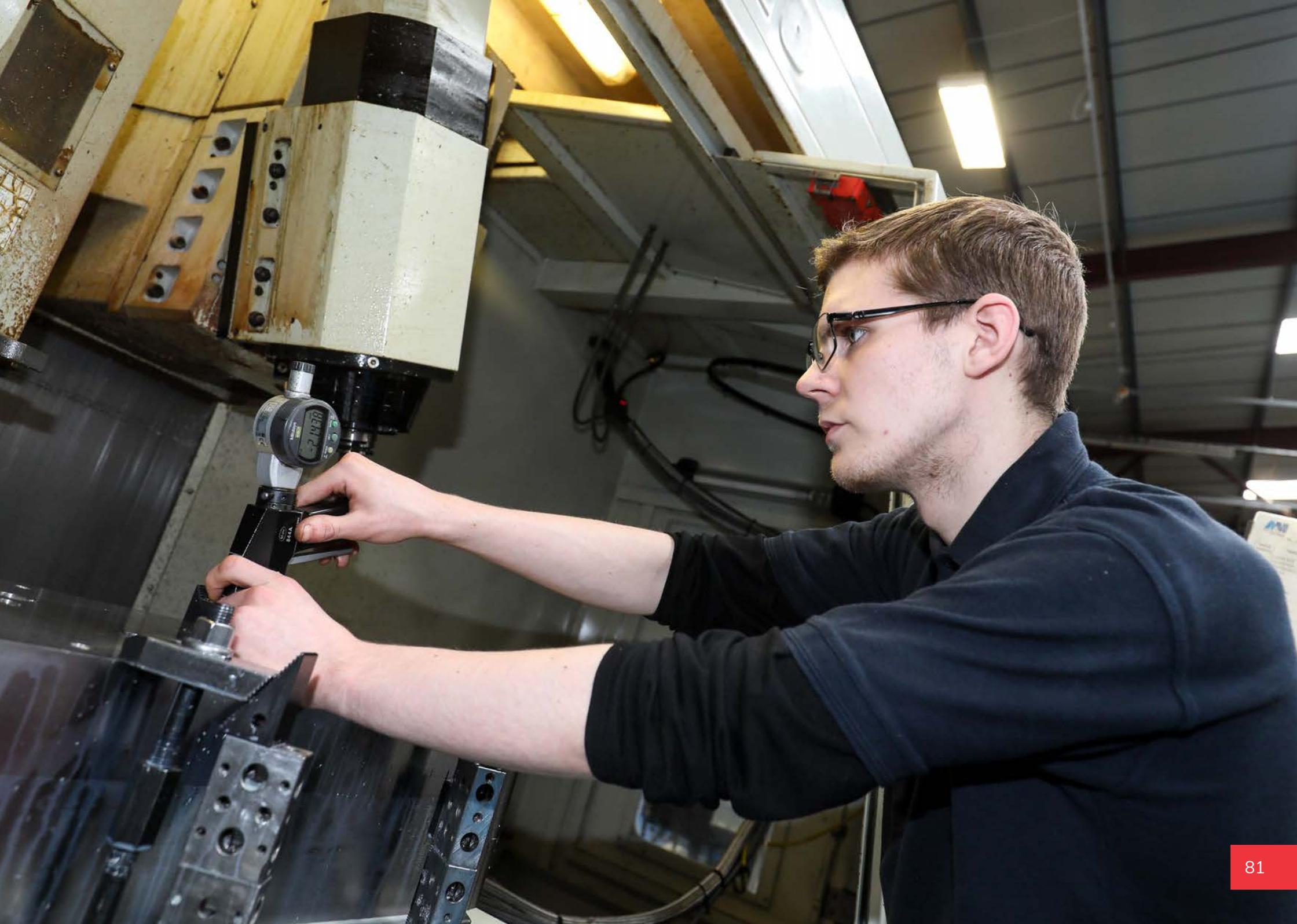


7.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTINUED

Progression to advanced level – trend analysis



There was a significant improvement in learner progression in 22/23, with 57.6% of high needs learners progressing onto the next level of study. 45.3% returned on the same level, however, this would include those returning on the same level but larger size of qualifications e.g. Level 1 Certificate to Level 1 Diploma. 5.7% of learners returned on a lower-level qualification, most of which would be due to learners moving into a differing curriculum area to their original study, where skills would require building.



8. FINANCIAL HEALTH INDICATORS

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE'S FINANCIAL POSITION

The college has invested substantially in its estate over the last 10 years to create sector leading education facilities within the Dudley and Brierley Hill Learning Quarters. Learners and employers have been at the heart of this investment by identifying skills gaps to meet the local and regional need. The College has stabilised its financial position following the Covid pandemic and along with on-going cost control measures, has enabled the college to deliver strong annual operating performances, despite the challenging financial environment.

Dudley College of Technology has proactively responded to the government's skills agenda through the opening of the Institute of Technology, working with partners to adapt and tailor our apprenticeship and adult offer. The College is a large provider of apprenticeships and whilst we are not forecasting significant growth, our aim is to ensure that our offer meets the regional skills needs of our employers. The college has refreshed its adult offer to directly deliver on Government and Combined Authority priorities and is forecasting small increases in income over the next two years.

The college continues to carefully manage its cost base and this has resulted in an improved EBITDA as a percentage of income of 11.7% (£5.6m), an increase on prior year of 1%. The continued benefits of good cost control means that EBITDA is well above the FEC recommended benchmark.

As a result of the ONS reclassification of FE colleges to the public sector, the College has repaid its revolving credit facility of £3.5m and replaced this with a DfE short term loan of £1.25m. As a result borrowing as a percentage of income has fallen from 38% to 31% in 2022/23.

Historically the college's current ratio (an indicator of short-term liquidity – the higher the current ratio the better) has remained low due to investment into our estate and facilities. However the current ratio has continued to improve and at 1.47 is above the FEC benchmark of 1.4. The college has closely managed cash balances, conserving cash investment in the student experience and this helped to increase the year-end cash balance and improve cash days to 59 at the July 2023 year-end, well above the FE Commissioner benchmark of 25. Careful cash management will continue to be a central component in the college's financial strategy, and we anticipate that cash, and cash days, will remain healthy in 2024.

The college's financial health as measured by the ESFA continues to gain strength and remains at Good. This has been driven by a more positive EBITDA and cash position. Operating performance and improving liquidity should ensure that the college's financial health grade of 'Good' continues in 2023/24.

KEY FINANCIAL STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

For many years the college has had a strong and sustainable operating performance which has generated sufficient levels of cash from operating activities to service debt obligations and maintain investment in our staff, facilities and strategic projects. Substantial investment in the estate and facilities has increased the college's capacity to deliver more education and training at a time of demographic growth. As a result the college has sustained student numbers and income. This investment has also ensured a high standard of learning environment that reflects industry standard for our technical education areas. This investment has been achieved through careful borrowing and substantial support from central government and other agencies.

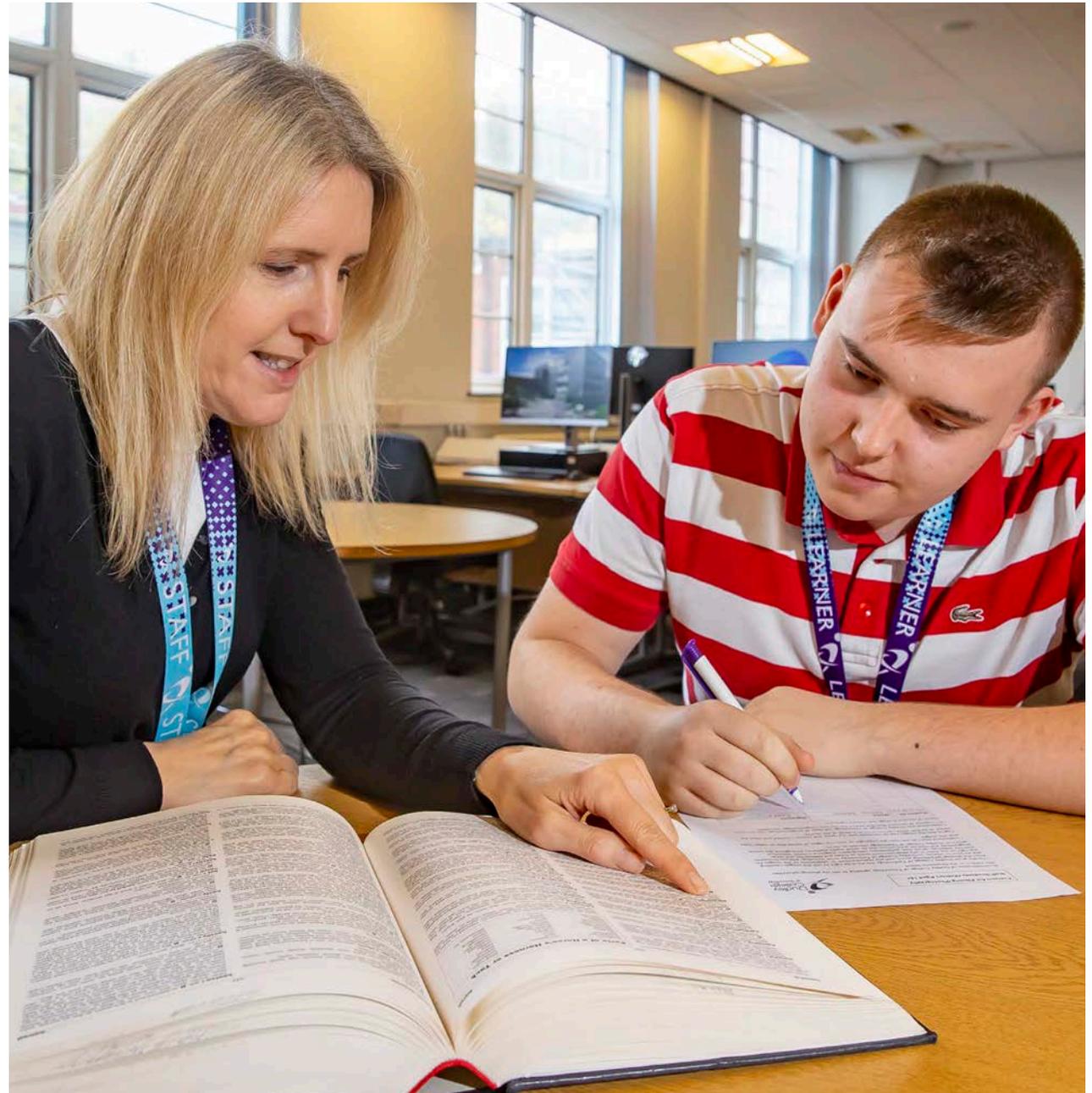
The college continues to review its operational base and consolidate activity to deliver to local and regional priorities. This has reduced the level of operational risk and means that management is able to focus on the quality of teaching and learning and financial stability of its core operations. The college works closely with the Combined Authority and has been innovative in meeting regional priorities; this has ensured ongoing opportunities for further income generation. Equally the college is not overly reliant on a single source of income, thereby reducing the financial risk of income fluctuation.

The college has taken a number of steps to re-align its costs and this has meant that staffing budgets have been met, and non-pay costs are within budget. Combined with modest increases in income from 2022-23 with an increasing need for more training and upskilling to drive the economy forward, the college has continued to improve its operating performance with an EBITDA of 12% of income by July 2023.

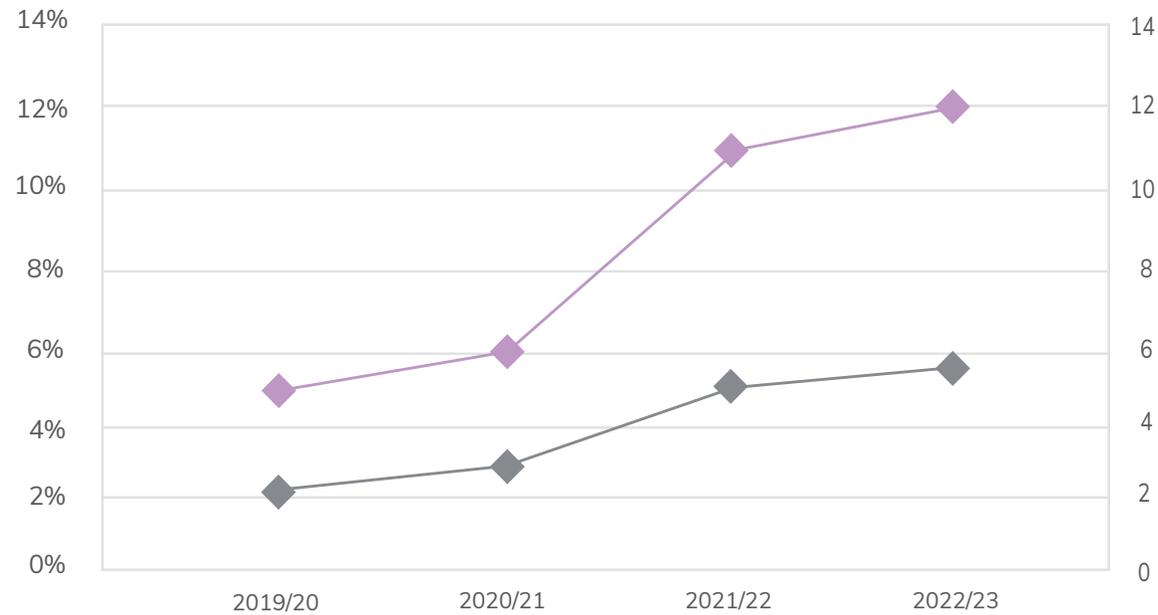
Cash generated from operations, alongside a controlled capital expenditure programme, is ensuring the college meets its longer-term financial objective of growing cash and removing any reliance on existing working capital facilities by 2025, whilst maintaining the milestone of Good financial health. The Corporation agreed a financial strategy in 2021 to retain cash, repay loans, improve the college's financial health and protect its long-term sustainability. It includes key performance indicators on EBITDA, cash days, borrowing and pay as a percentage of income. At July 2023 all KPIs were achieved and loan covenants were comfortably met; this level of performance is expected to continue into 2024.

As a result of the planned investment and subsequent growth in student numbers, the college's cash balances and short-term liquidity measures, such as the current ratio of current assets compared to current liabilities, have exceeded the FEC recommended target. The College has set limited budgets for future capital investment, substantial grants through DfE and Salix have enabled the College to yet again make major improvements to the estate. A joint project with DMBC and the University of Worcester to construct a new Health Innovation Centre is being entirely funded by the Towns Fund. The focus on income generation opportunities, cost control and cashflow management will continue to deliver strong performance in EBITDA and current ratio.

Income from all sources continues to be susceptible from economic uncertainty and the college has put mechanisms in place to monitor recruitment against plans on a real-time basis. This will allow the college to quickly respond to variances in income either through generating additional opportunities or to reduce costs.



8.1 OPERATING PERFORMANCE



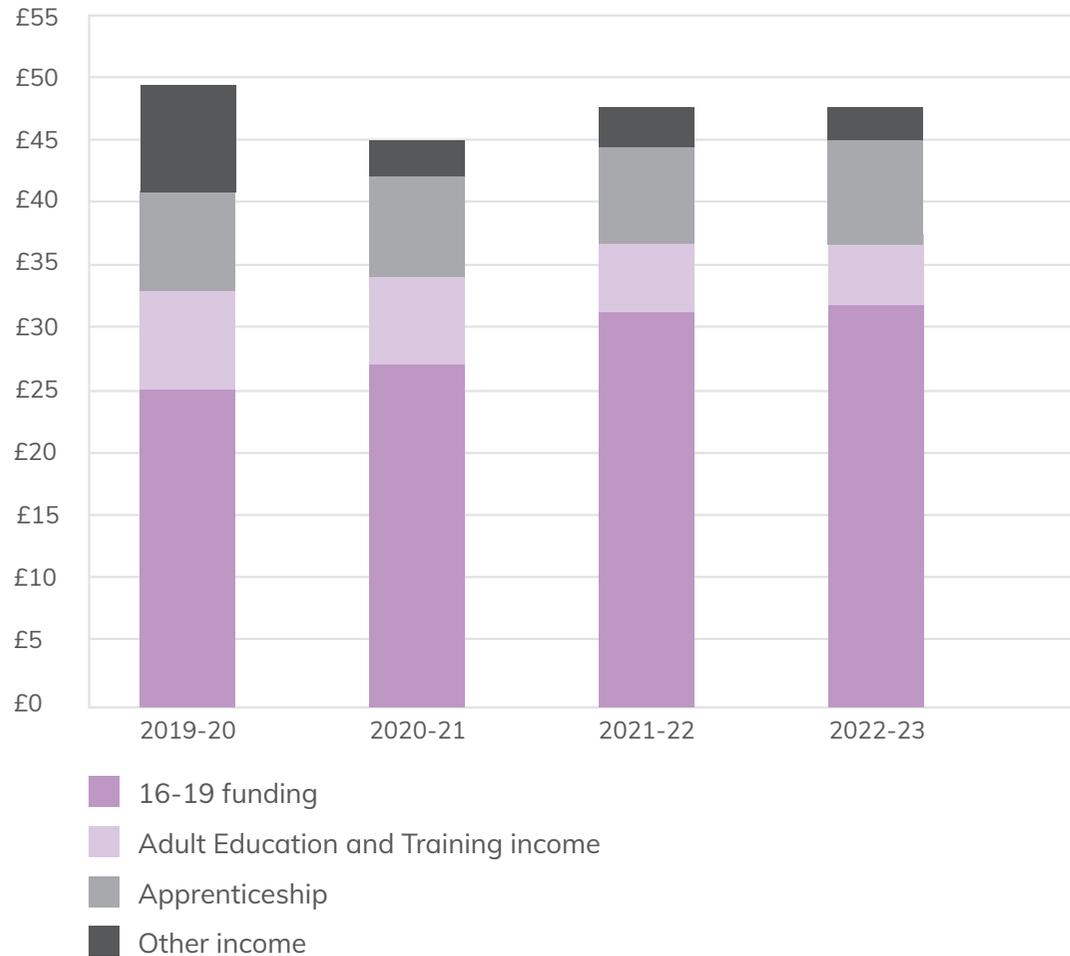
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
EBITDA as a % of income	5%	6%	11%	12%
EBITDA £m	2.2	2.68	5.01	5.55

The education specific EBITDA as a percentage of income is a measure of the underlying operating strength of the college. The higher the percentage measure, the stronger the operational performance. A measure of 8% and above is the recognised benchmark by the FEC.

The investment made by the college in our Dudley and Brierley Hill Learning Quarters resulted in growth in learner numbers and income. EBITDA has improved by ensuring costs are aligned to recruitment and teaching delivery.

8.2 TOTAL INCOME

Total Income (£m)



We continue to see small increases in income since the drop to £46m during the pandemic. The increase in income in 2023 is largely driven through higher levels of ESFA funding for students aged 16-19 and this will continue to grow in 2024, as a result of the growth in students in 2023.

8.3 STAFF COSTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF INCOME

Staff Cost as % of Income



The College continues to meet the AoC recommended pay awards for staff, additional funding has been made available in 2023 to fund a cost of living increase of 6.5%. Pay costs continue to be tightly controlled and some minor restructuring in 2023 has ensured that the College's establishment effectively matches resource requirements.

The college has also been mindful of the need to retain staff with specialist skills in order to remain flexible and respond to emerging demand in the adult and apprenticeship market.

Inevitably this puts pressure on pay budgets and increases the risk of carrying vacancies for skilled staff.

The controls over pay spending will ensure a continued alignment of pay costs with delivery requirements and means that the college remains at or below the FEC benchmark of pay being 65% of turnover.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
■ Dudley College	71%	70%	65%	64%
■ FE Commissioner benchmark	65%	65%	65%	65%

8.4 ADJUSTED CURRENT RATIO



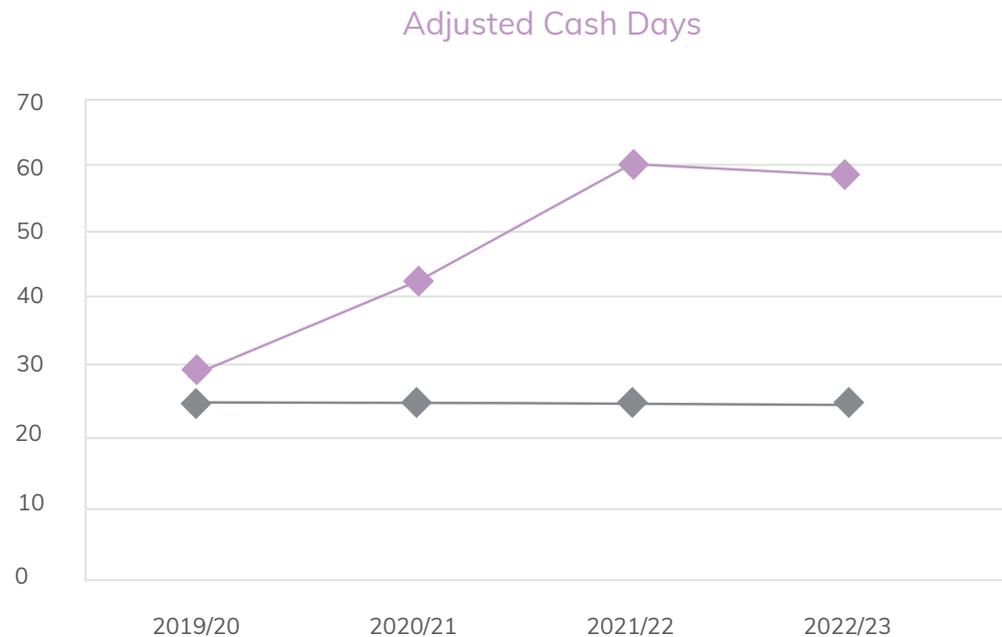
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
■ Current ratio	0.86	0.84	1.01	1.47
■ ESFA financial health score	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
■ FEC benchmark	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4

The current ratio is a measure of current assets compared to current liabilities and is used as an indicator of short-term liquidity. Whilst not a direct measure of cash, the higher the percentage measure, the better a college's liquidity, which means the more cash, or assets that can be easily converted into cash, a college has got compared to its short-term

liabilities. The ESFA 'good' benchmark is a current ratio of 1.2, whilst the FEC benchmark is 1.4, which the College has exceeded in 2023.

The focused spend on capital projects in 2023, supported by grants from DfE and Salix has resulted in an improved cash position and therefore a better current ratio. Cash management will continue to be important going forward as we balance the College's liquidity needs against the requirement to repay short term borrowing. We anticipate that the College's current ratio will continue to be strong over the next few years as the college maintains control on costs, targets capital expenditure and has a prudent repayment plan of short term borrowing.

8.5 CASH DAYS



Cash days is the number of days that an organisation can continue to pay its operating expenses given its current level of available cash. The FE Commissioner's benchmark is for colleges to have sufficient cash to cover 25 cash days.

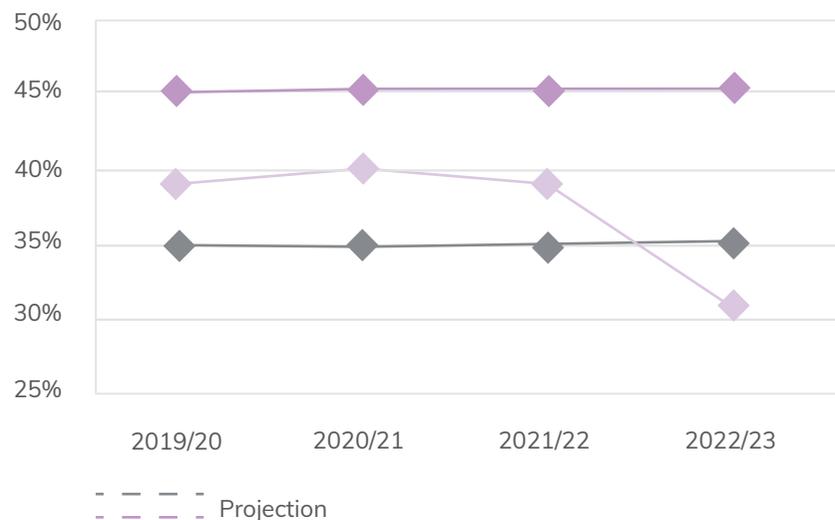
Strong cash generation from operating activities supported by a re-structure of our bank loan facilities helped improve the college's cash days since 2020. Closely managed cash balances, capital investment and costs, has helped to maintain the year-end cash balance and cash days to 59 at 31 July 2023, well above the FE Commissioner benchmark of 25, and facilitated early repayment of some short term borrowing.

Cash management will continue to be imperative going forwards as we navigate through an economically challenging period. We anticipate that cash, and cash days, will be maintained above the FEC target of 25.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
■ Cash days - Dudley College	29	42	60	59
■ FE Commissioner benchmark	25	25	25	25



8.6 BORROWING AS A PERCENTAGE OF INCOME



	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/23
■ Borrowing as a % of income	39%	40%	38%	31%
■ Requires improvement threshold	45%	45%	45%	45%
■ Good threshold	35%	35%	35%	35%

Borrowing as a percentage of income (also known as gearing or leverage) is used to measure the proportion of assets invested in a college that are financed by borrowing. It also provides an indicator to the longer term financial stability of a college, because the higher the level of borrowing, the higher the risk to a college since more cash will have to be set aside to meet debt and interest repayments leaving less cash for everything else. The lower the percentage measure, the better a college's gearing and its prospects for long term stability. Colleges with a financial health score of Good are likely to have borrowing at 35% of income or less.

As a result of the ONS reclassification of FE colleges to the public sector, the college had sufficient cash during the year to repay its commercial revolving credit facility of £3.5m and replace with a short term loan with DfE of £1.25m. The DfE loan will be fully repaid by 2026. This has supported the College's strategy of continuing to reduce reliance on borrowing and as a percentage of income, borrowing has dropped from 38% to 31% in 2023.

8.7 ESFA FINANCIAL HEALTH GRADE



The College's financial health grade is assessed by scoring the adjusted current ratio, EBITDA as a percentage of adjusted income and borrowing as a percentage of income. The total scores provide an overall financial health grade, based on a banding structure illustrated in the chart.

The improved operating position and higher cash levels have resulted in a strong increase in financial health score with the College approaching the Outstanding band.

The College expects to maintain its Good financial health score into 2024.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Financial health score	130	130	200	180
Outstanding	240	240	240	240
Good threshold	180	180	180	180
Requires improvement	120	120	120	120

Further information on the College's performance can be found on the Dudley dashboard on the College's website: dudleycol.ac.uk/our-college/about-us/dashboard