

A young Black male student is the central focus, wearing a black beanie, a dark jacket, and a high-visibility yellow safety vest. He is smiling slightly and holding a yellow and grey surveying instrument (a total station) mounted on a tripod. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

# ANNUAL STRATEGIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2024/25

DECEMBER 2025

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AND INPUTS



ENGAGEMENT AND  
PARTICIPATION



IMPACT ON DIVERSITY  
AND INCLUSION



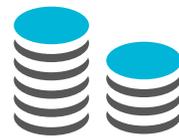
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

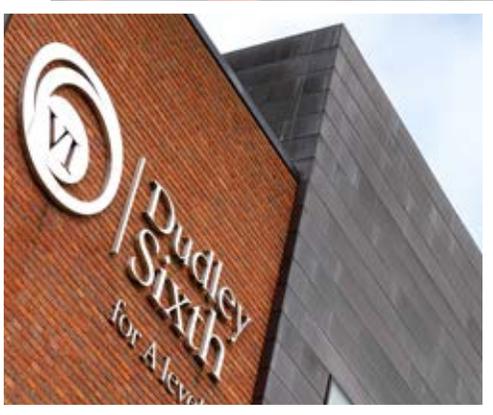
The Annual Strategic Impact Assessment is a high-level analytical document which reviews the College's progress in delivering our Strategic Plan. It explicitly assesses the impact the college has made on its learners and the wider economy.

The Annual Strategic Impact Assessment shows clearly the main strategic outputs that we have achieved for every key client group that we serve. Where possible this is benchmarked against all appropriate national comparators, allowing all stakeholders to see how the college has performed in terms of key outputs such as achievement, diversity, participation, satisfaction, regional skills priorities, and financial health.

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.

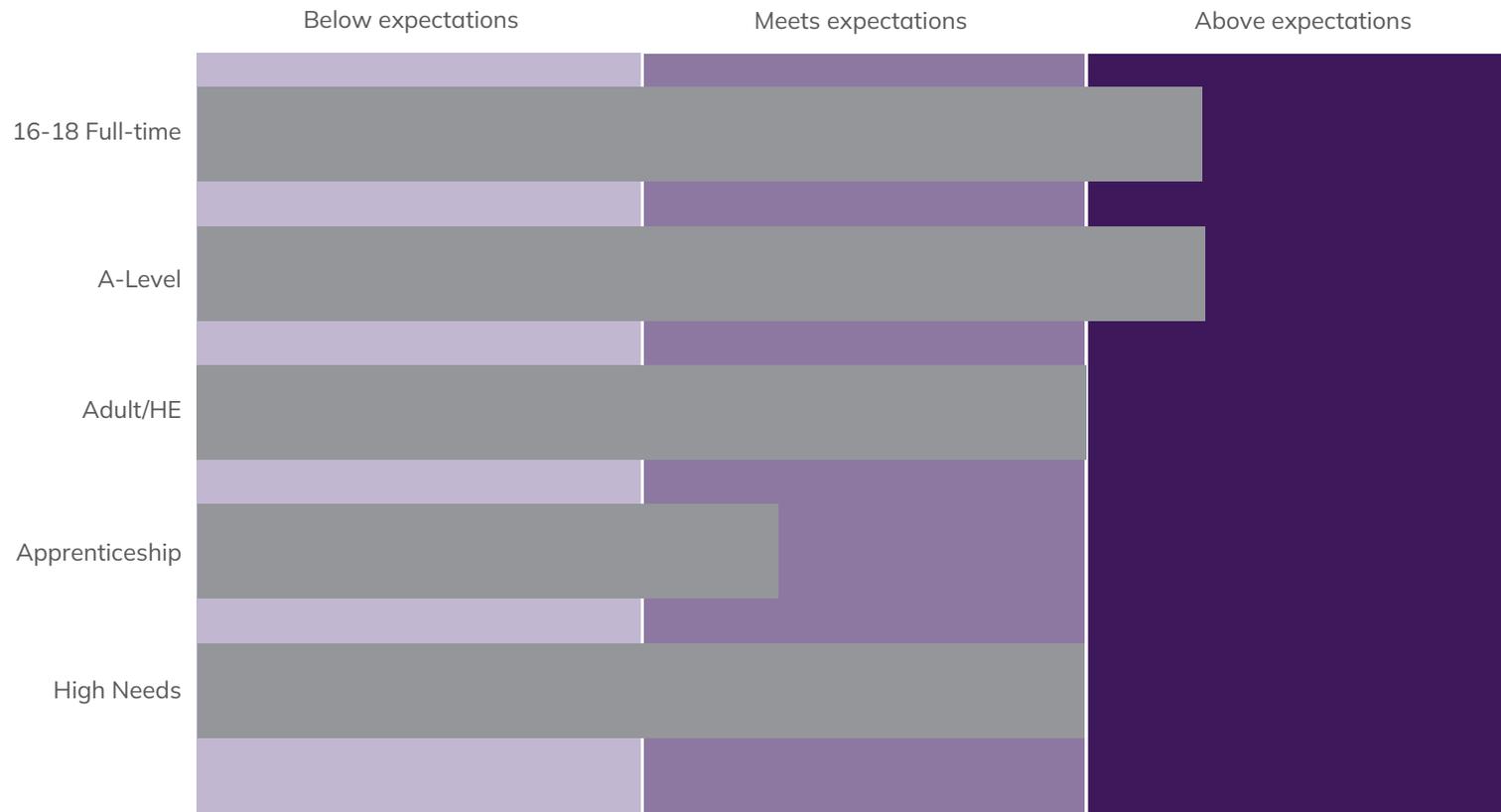
We also recognise that we could not have achieved what we have done without the incredible support of our local community and the employers we serve locally and regionally. Dudley College of Technology is proud to be a member of a fantastic community which is working together for the benefit of us all.





# 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 'above expectations'. This group is above expectations in terms of diversity of our learners, alignment of our programmes to regional skills needs, financial contribution and positive destinations. All other measures are currently meeting college expectations. Whilst there are some excellent outcomes in these measures, we will continue to work towards improving achievement rates and student satisfaction.

### 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/HE 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 or to achieving higher level qualifications.

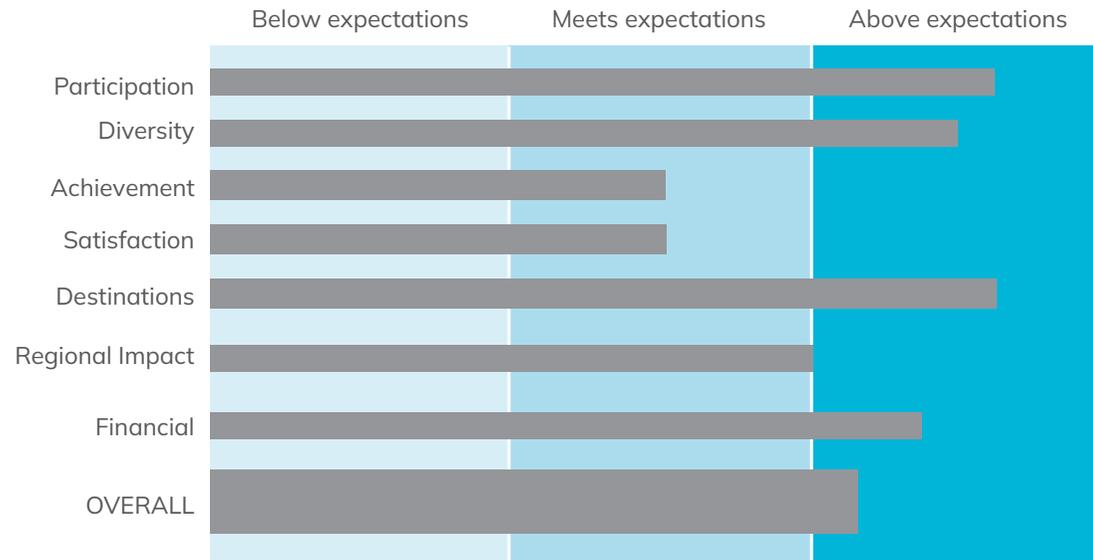
### APPRENTICESHIPS

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 reasons which are out of our control. Pass rates for those apprentices who complete their course remain very high. The alignment of our provision to regional skills needs continue to be a strength.

### HIGH NEEDS LEARNERS

The overall performance of this key client group is 'meeting 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 'above expectations'. This group is above expectations in terms of diversity of our learners, alignment of our programmes to regional skills needs, financial contribution and positive destinations. All other measures are currently meeting college expectations. Whilst there are some excellent outcomes in these measures, we will continue to work towards improving achievement rates and student satisfaction.



# SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

## What key outputs did we achieve?

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

- We engaged 5,070 young people in learning in 2024/25 demonstrating a growth of just over 200 learners from the previous academic year.

### We successfully engaged learners from diverse communities:

- 1,931 learners (38.6%) were from ethnic minority groups. Our learners are more diverse than the local community where 15.1% of the population are from minority groups.
- 1,208 learners (25%) reported a learning difficulty or disability.

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

- Over 83.5% of all 16-18 learners achieved their qualifications which is in line with national statistics
- 95.9% of T Level learners passed their qualification against a national rate of 91.4%.
- 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:

- 3,154 (63%) young people were following STEM programmes of study which demonstrates continued impact on local and regional priority skills areas.
- 745 (60.5%) 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 6% compared to the previous year
- We supported 200 learners to achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE English resits. 157 learners achieved grade 4 or above in GCSE Maths.

- 56.7% of learners improved their starting grade in English, with 40% of learners improving their starting grade in Maths.

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

- 90.8 % of our learners continued into training, employment, or higher education.

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

- Satisfaction levels of our learners have remained in line with previous years.

## What better outputs could we achieve?

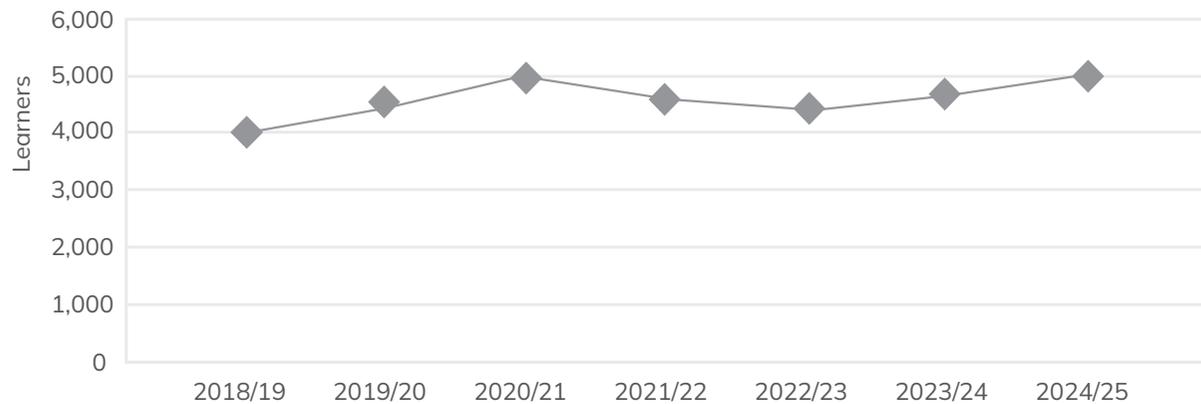
- Continue the upward trend in achievement rates on L1 and L2 programmes of study so we are at least at national rates.
- Support more young people on technical training to achieve high grades.
- Improve English & mathematics attendance.
- Improve the number of young people achieving a 4 or above in GCSE mathematics resits.





## 2.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

Learner engagement trend analysis

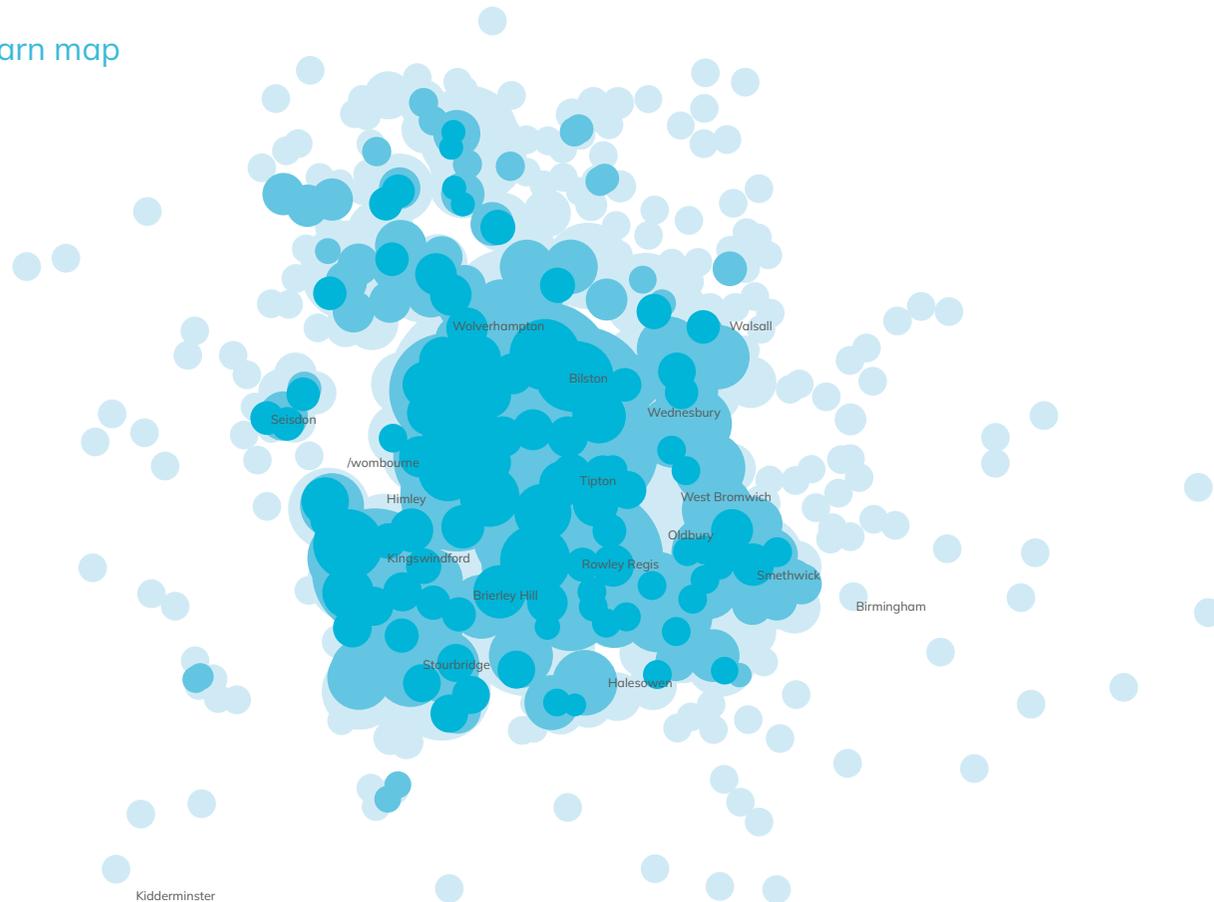


The numbers of 16 to 18 enrolled continued to increase in 24/25 with nearly 200 more learners enrolled than in 23/24. Continued high numbers of 16-18 learners confirms high levels of confidence in Dudley College of Technology and will continue to support the regional economy as well as our own financial health.



## 2.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

### Travel to learn map

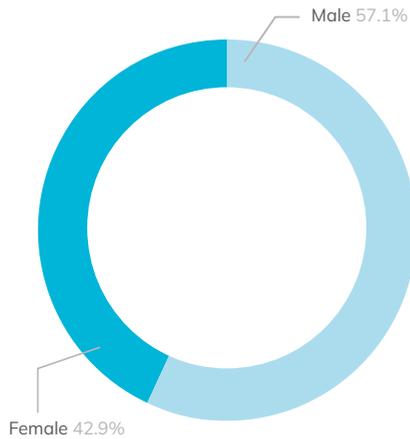


The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our learners in 2024/25. Most learners are from Dudley borough, as you would expect, with increasing numbers of learners looking to remain in Dudley to study rather than travel elsewhere. Our highly equipped estate across the Dudley and Brierley Hill Learning Quarters continue to transform the lives of young people aged 16-18 across the wider region.

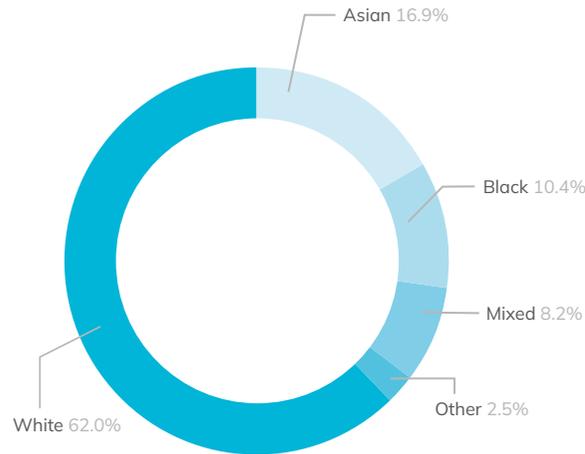


## 2.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

### Gender



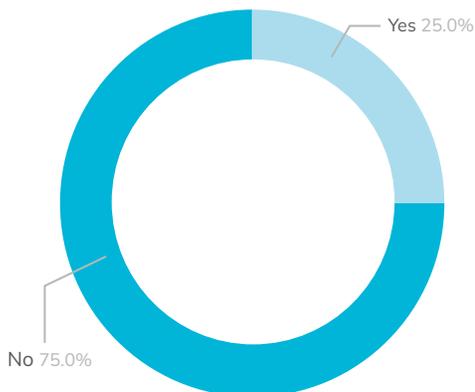
### Ethnicity



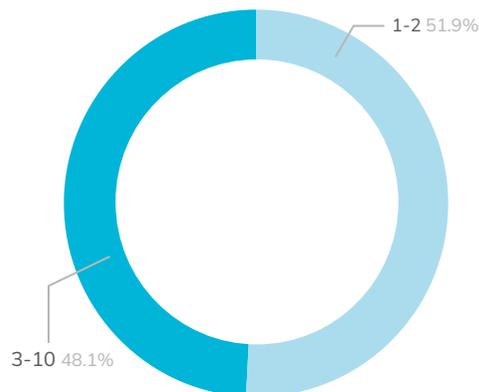
For learners aged 16-18, there continued to be more male learners in 2024/25 than female, however both groups achieved at very similar rates on their technical and vocational programmes.

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. 37.9% of our learners are from minority groups who make up 15.1% of the local population. The majority of 16-18 learners representing these groups perform equally well to their peers with those declaring Asian or Black as their ethnicity performing slightly above college averages. The college has worked hard at narrowing any emerging achievement gaps and there are now no significant gaps in achievement rates between ethnicities.

### Learning difficulty or disability



### Deprivation Band



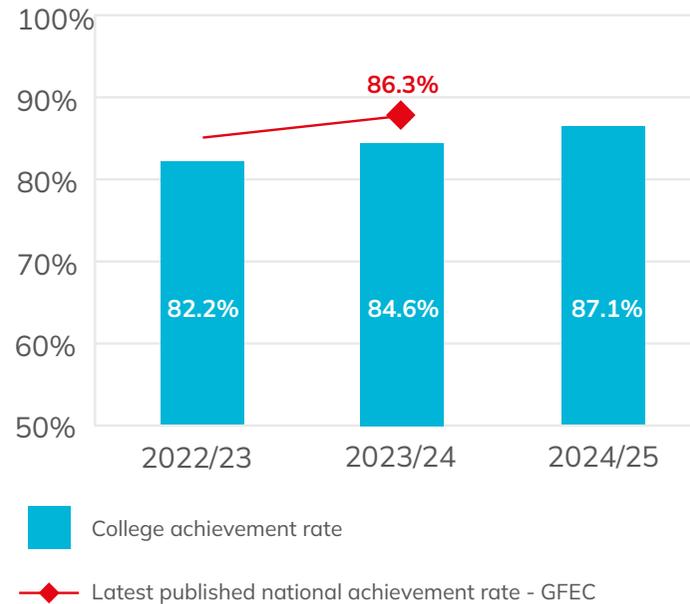
1,268 (25%) of the 16-18 learners we support have a learning difficulty or disability. This represents a 15.5% increase over the past 3 years. Learners with difficulties and disabilities achieve at a comparable rate to their peers on core and GCSE programmes.

In our 16 to 18 cohort when you compare the performance of learners experiencing potential barriers to learning including socio-economic, care experienced and in receipt of free college meals, there are no significant differences in achievement.



## 2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Achievement rates - all programmes excluding English & Mathematics  
Overall achievement rate (all levels)

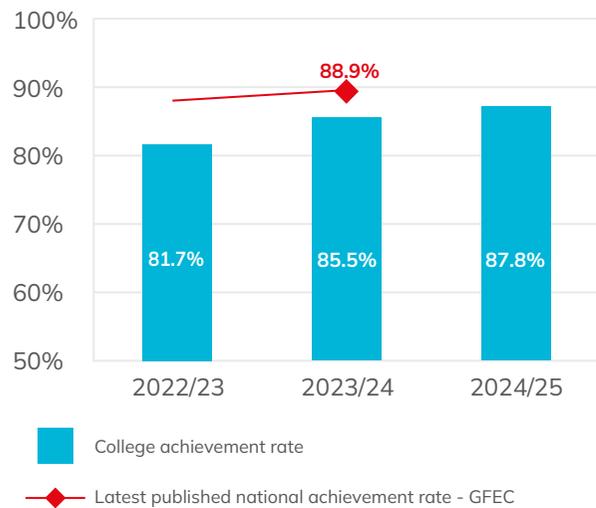


24/25 saw a 2.5% increase in achievement of 16- to 18-year-olds on their technical and vocational programmes putting our learners marginally above last published national rates overall.

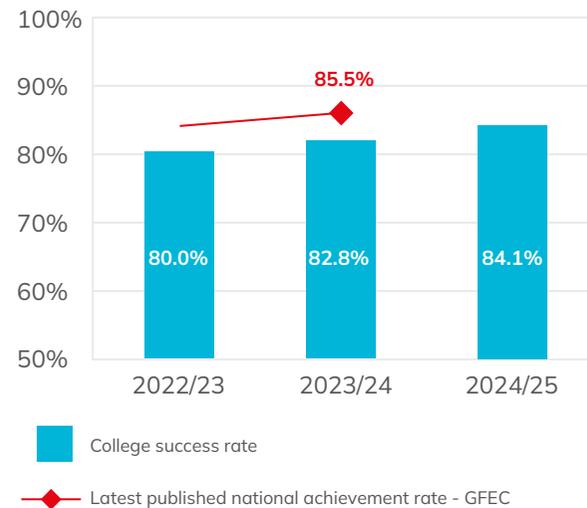


## 2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

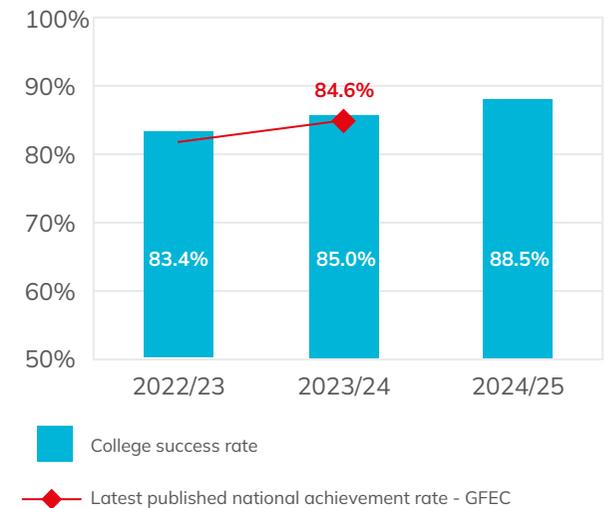
### Achievement rate - Level 1



### Achievement rate - Level 2



### Achievement rate - Level 3



Level 1 achievement rate is now 87.8% and shows a 3 year upward trend improving by 2.5% from the previous year.

Level 2 achievement rate has seen an increase in 24/25 of +1.3% to 84.1% and the College continues to move closer to the last published national levels also demonstrating a 3 year upward trend.

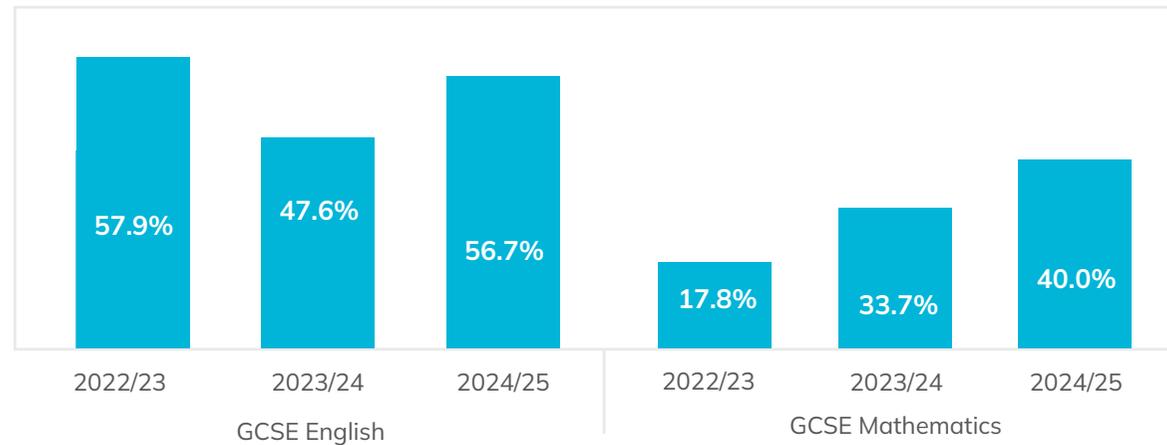
Our largest provision at Level 3, accounts for over half of our 16-18 client group and has performed above national rates this year (+3.9%) with achievement rates of 88.5%.

We continued to increase the number of learners studying the T Level qualifications and in 24/25 ,95.9% of T Level learners passed their qualification against a national rate of 91.4%.



## 2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

GCSE retake results - three year trend



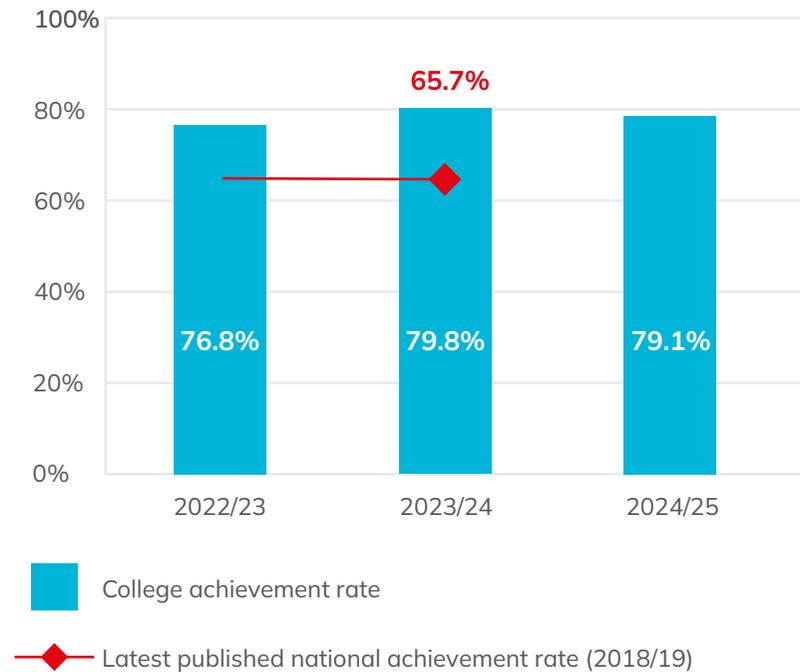
The data does not reflect learners who did not achieve or did not attend.

The numbers of learners needing to resit GCSE maths and English remains high. In 2024/25, we supported 200 learners to achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE English resits and 157 learners in GCSE maths. 56.7% of learners improved their starting grade in English, with 40% of learners improving their starting grade in maths.



## 2.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

Functional Skills SfL achievement rate - all levels

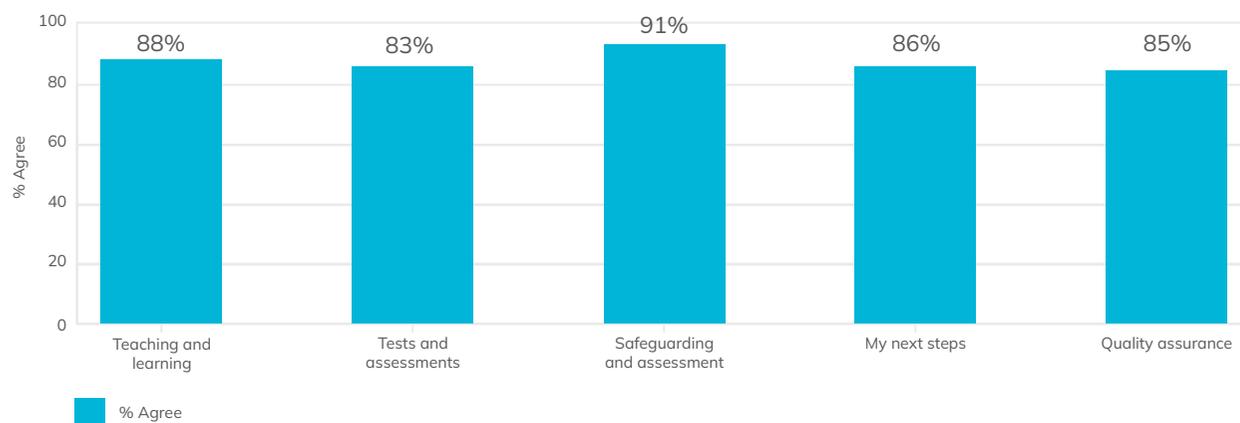


The achievement rates for young people studying Functional Skills English and mathematics qualification is in line with the previous year at 79.1%, and remains well above the last published national average.



## 2.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

End of year learner satisfaction (QDP survey)



Each year, the college uses a variety of ways to gather learner satisfaction rates regarding their programme of study as well as the wider college experience. The feedback received, is used to inform subject area impact assessments and curriculum quality improvement plans. The college employs an external agency, QDP to conduct mid and year of year surveys to benchmark against 75 other general further education colleges who have received an Ofsted Grade 2 or above.

It is clear from the survey results, that learners in this client group are highly satisfied with the teaching and learning they receive (88%) and feel the college cares about their wellbeing and safety (91%).

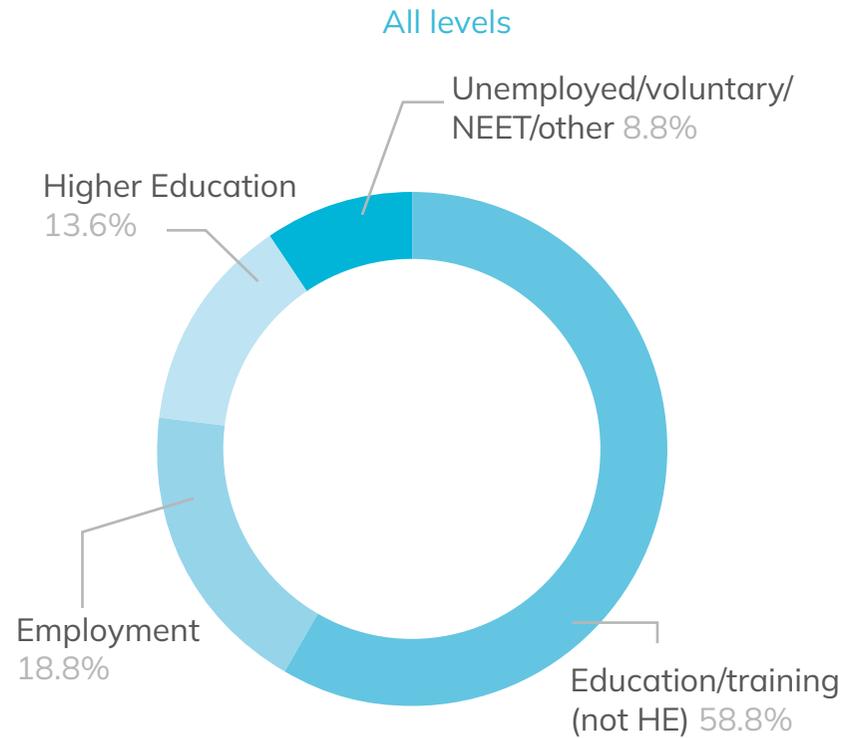
86% of learners surveyed, state they have been well informed regarding their next steps with 85% agreeing that the quality of their programme is good. Whilst still good at 83%, learners have been less satisfied with their exam and assessment arrangements this academic year.

Despite these positive returns, where there are significant differences between college performance and that of similar providers, this will be investigated at course level. Actions for improvement will feed into Subject Area Impact Assessments (SAIAs) with a view to planning for improvement.

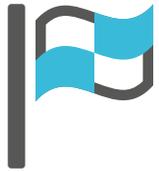




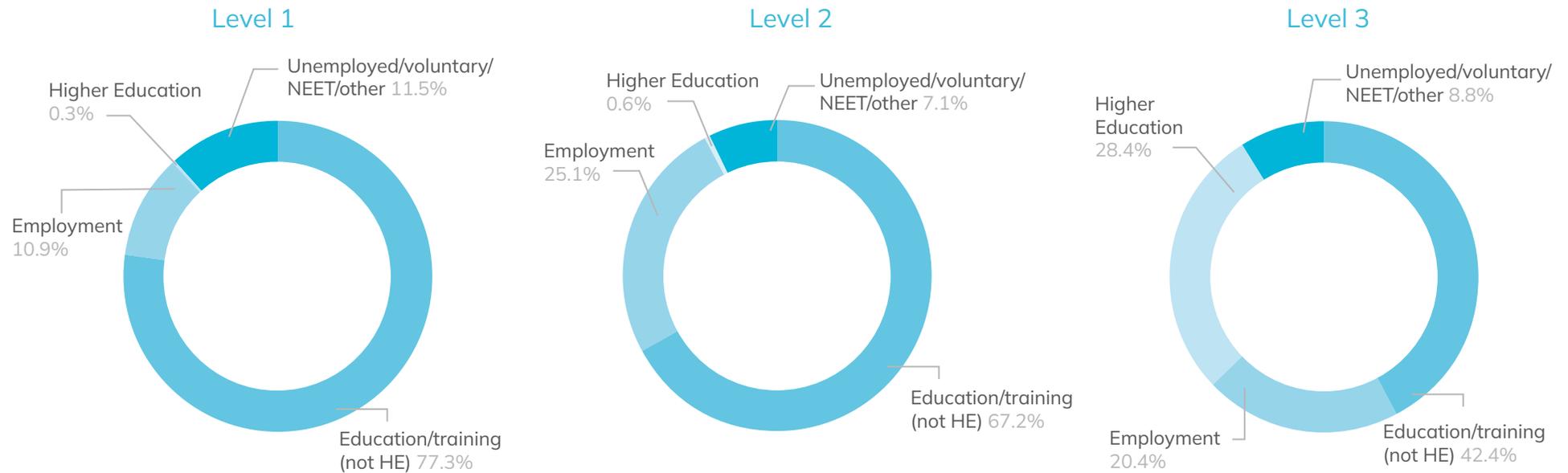
## 2.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS



We successfully support the majority of our learners into positive destinations with 90.8% continuing in training, employment, or higher education.



## 2.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS CONTINUED



88.5% of Level 1 learners progressed into positive destinations.

92.9% of Level 2 learners progressed into positive destinations.

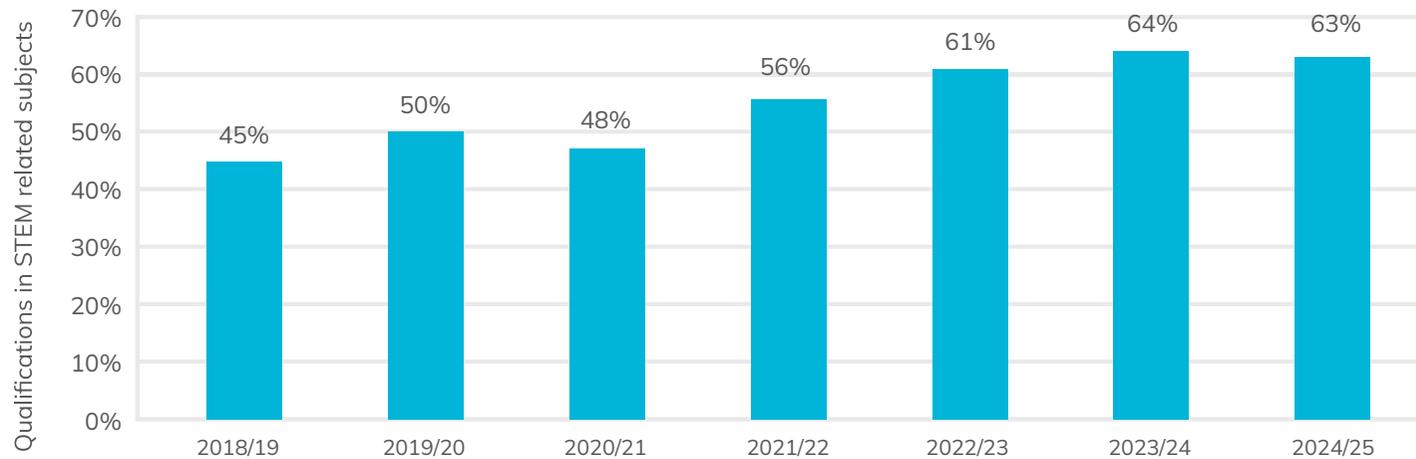
91.2% of Level 3 learners progressed into positive destinations.

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 to higher level training. These courses develop technical skills, build confidence, and enhance future career prospects. Seamless progression pathways support individual learners whilst positively contributing to the productivity of the local and regional economy.



## 2.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

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

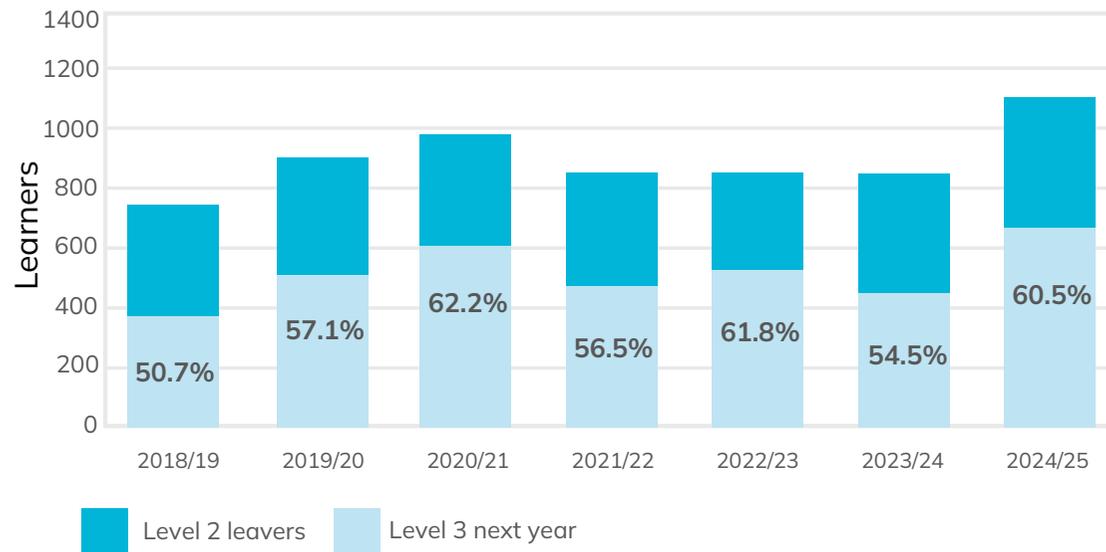


The local economy relies on a workforce with high level skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The chart shows the percentage of qualifications completed by learners aged 16-18 years that were in STEM related subjects. In 2024-25, 63% of our young people followed STEM programmes of study which is comparable the previous year. The continued interest in numbers of our learners choosing to study STEM subjects, demonstrates our ongoing focus on ensuring we develop curriculum to meet the needs of both our students and these local, regional, and national priority sectors.



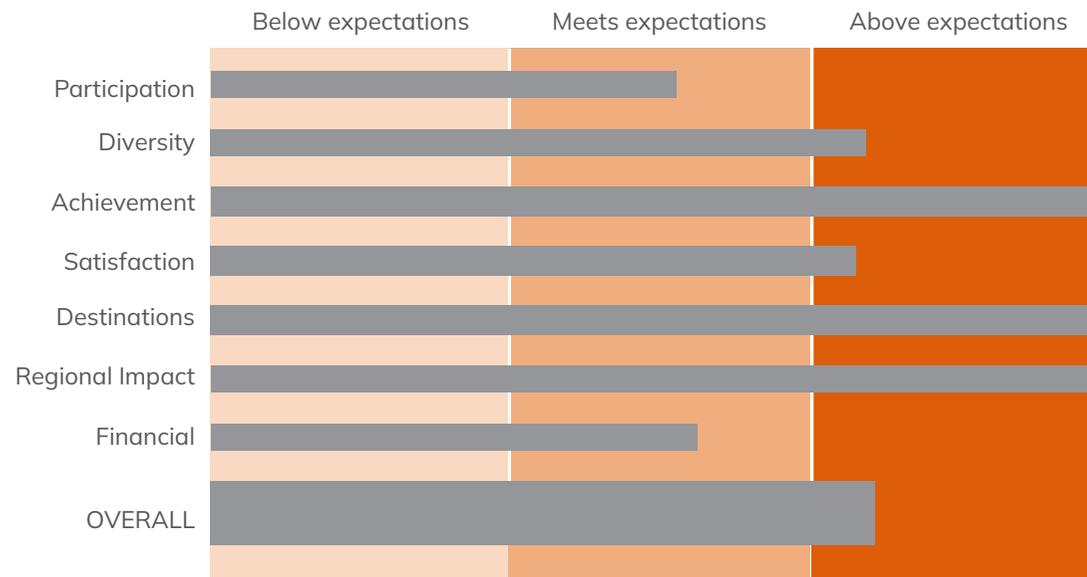
## 2.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTINUED

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



As detailed in the graph, 60.5% of all the College's Level 2 learners progressed directly into Level 3 provision. This demonstrates an increase of 6% 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 2024/25.

**We successfully engaged A level learners from diverse communities:**

- 318 (51.2%) A level learners were from ethnic minority groups. Our A level learners are significantly more diverse than the local community where 15.1% of the population are from minority groups.
- 78 (13%) A level 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 increased over a three-year trend with 77.4% of learners achieving A\* - C.
- The number of learners achieving A\*-B was 42.9%, with the overall pass rate 98.9%, 3.5% above national pass rates.

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

- 416 (67%) A level learners are studying STEM subjects.
- Overall satisfaction meets national benchmark for Sixth Form colleges with the overall perception at 90%, +8 on last academic year.

## What better outputs could we achieve?

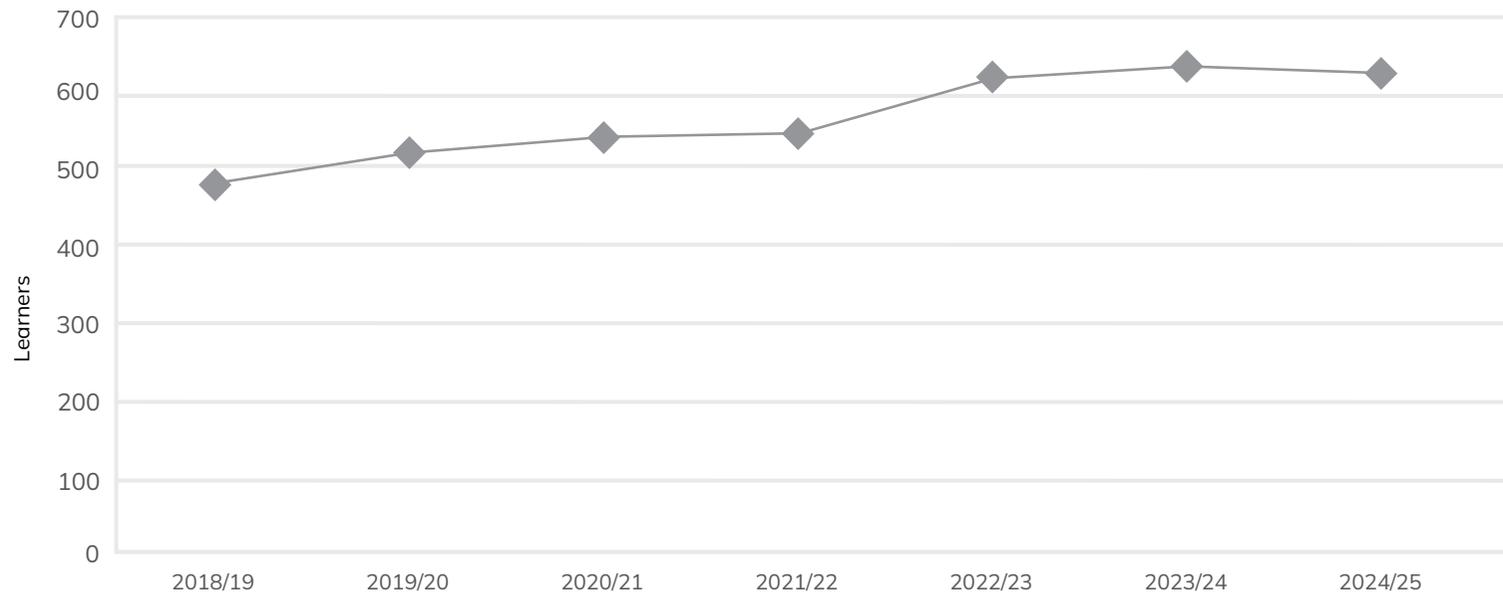
- The number of learners completing A levels progressing into higher apprenticeships.
- Reduce the gap in achievement between learners declaring a disability or learning difficult and those without.
- Close the gap in achievement for mixed heritage learners so they achieve at a similar rate to their peers.





## 3.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

Learner engagement trend analysis  
A Level Trend

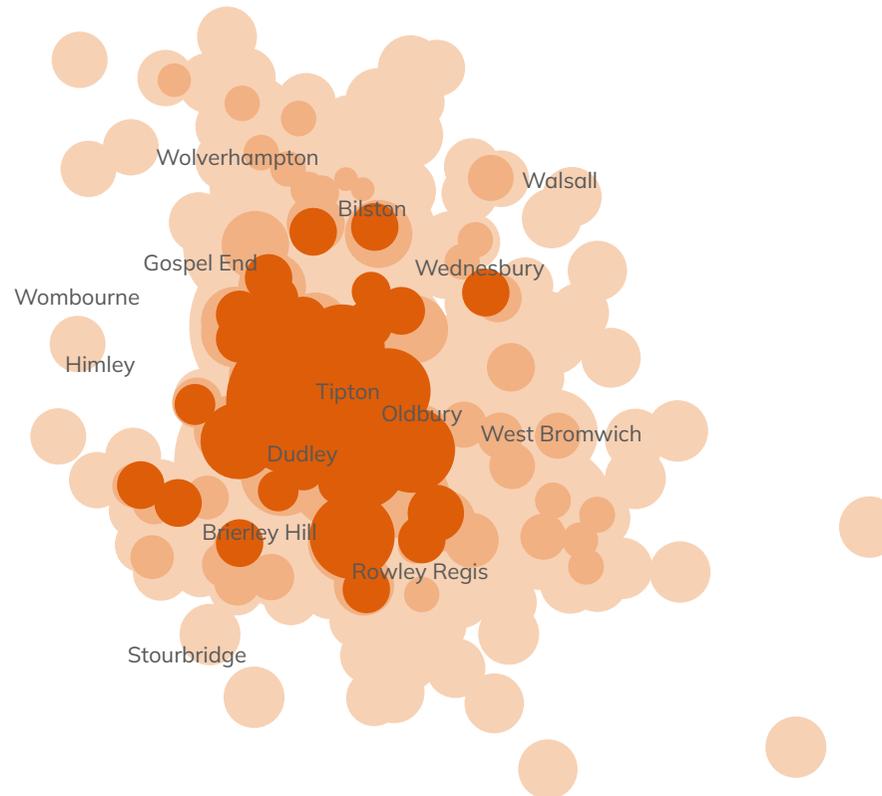


Dudley Sixth student engagement with A Level learning has continued to show strong participation in A level study in the 2024/25 academic year. Additionally, the sustained student number reflects the strength of our high-quality A Level offer and our increasingly strong reputation. We continue to provide more delivery hours per A Level and offer higher levels of support than other providers, contributing to this sustained engagement.



## 3.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

Travel to learn map

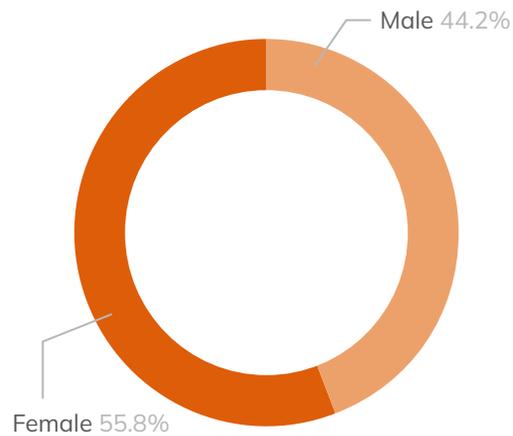


The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our A Level learners in 2024/25 is in line with 2023/24. We have continued to be the first choice for many local A Level learners who choose to study at Dudley Sixth rather than travelling elsewhere. We continue to attract learners from the wider region, which demonstrates the confidence young people and their parents have in Dudley Sixth to provide a positive post-16 experience with high levels of success.

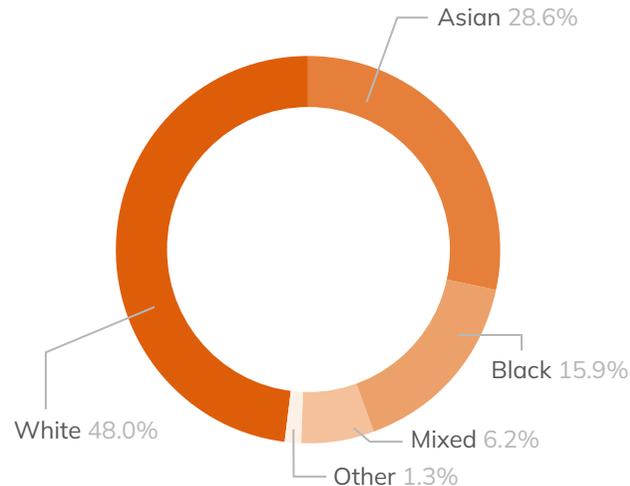


## 3.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

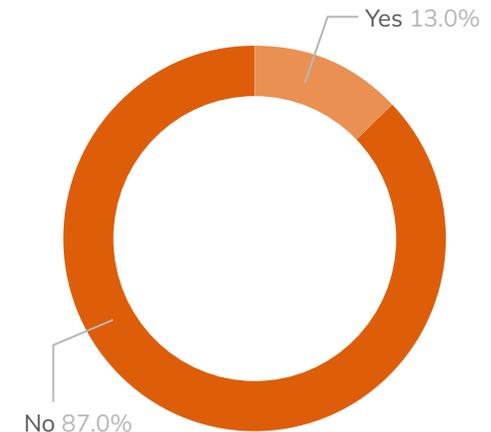
Gender



Ethnicity



Learning difficulty or disability



Dudley Sixth continues to support a very diverse student body. 2024/25 continued to see more female learners (346) choose to study A levels than male learners (274). Males achieved at a marginally higher rate than females (+2.8%), which is in contrast to previous years. A marginal increase in performance for females (+0.1%) but a significant increase in male performance (going from 80% to 88.4%).

The A Level ethnicity profile indicates that our learner cohort is more diverse than the local community, with representation from minority groups increasing by 5.3% to 318 learners (52.1%), compared to 45.9% last year. This is notably higher than the 15.1% minority population within the borough. The upward trend in achievement among Black learners has continued, and targeted support for those identifying as 'Other' has led to a significant improvement, effectively closing the achievement gap identified in 2023/24. This however needs to be monitored so that achievement is sustained. Asian achievement rates have also risen by 3.5%. However, outcomes for students identifying as 'Mixed Heritage' remain an area for improvement.

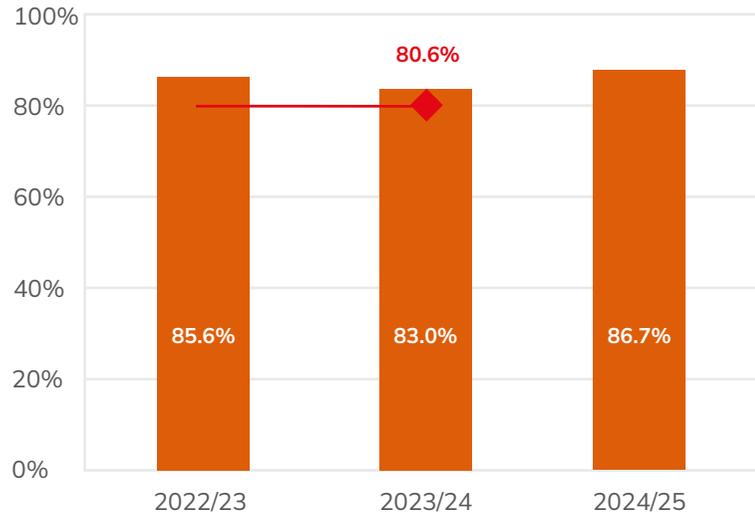
Dudley Sixth supports several students with learning difficulties or disabilities through a wide range of support mechanisms, with the proportion of learners declaring a disability/learning difficulty remaining broadly the same, 2023/24 – 80 (12.8%) learners compared to 78 learners (13%) in 2024-25. Achievement rates of this group are 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



■ College achievement rate

◆ Latest published national achievement rate - GFEC

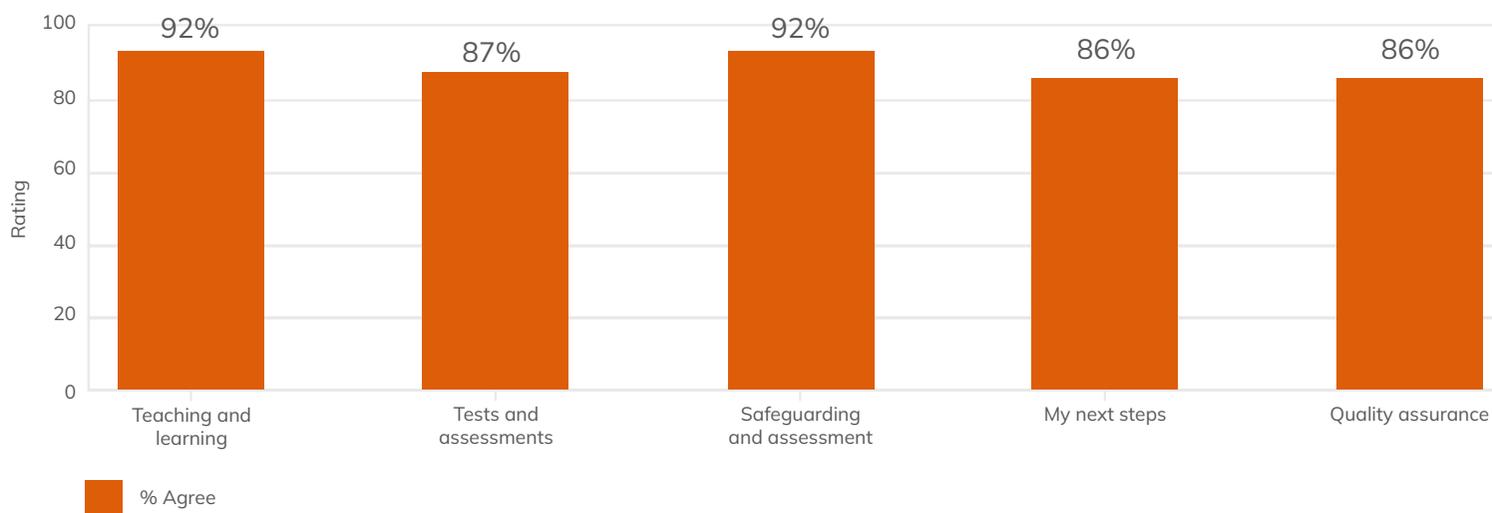
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
High grade pass % (A-B)	42.2%	45.2%	42.9%
High grade pass % (A-C)	70.3%	73.1%	77.4%

As a centre we achieved 77.4% A\*-C pass rates - which compares to a West Midlands JCQ rate of 77.9%. A\*-C pass rates have increased by 4.3% and overall achievement rates have improved by 3.7% (86.7%), which is 6.1% above national achievement rate. Achievement rates in Politics, Sociology, Economics are areas of focus for 2025/26.



## 3.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

End of year learner satisfaction (QDP survey)

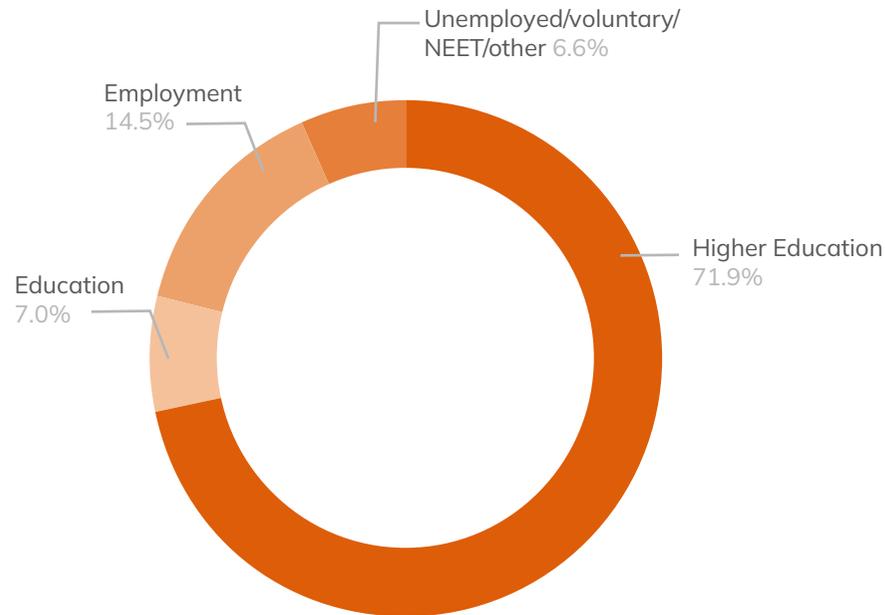


Learner satisfaction at Sixth is consistently strong. 92% of learners report that teaching and learning at Sixth is good, reflecting high-quality classroom experiences. Students also feel well supported through the assessment process, with 87% agreeing that exams and assessments provide useful feedback that helps them understand their progress. They also value the organisation of exams, describing it as focused and positive. Quality assurance processes are also viewed positively, with 86% of students confirming they are happy with how assessment practice and examinations are managed at Sixth. Learners feel well prepared for their future pathways, with 86% stating they are well informed about their next steps when progressing from Sixth. Safeguarding remains a significant strength. 92% of students report that they feel safe and well supported during their time at Sixth.



## 3.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

### A Levels - 2nd years

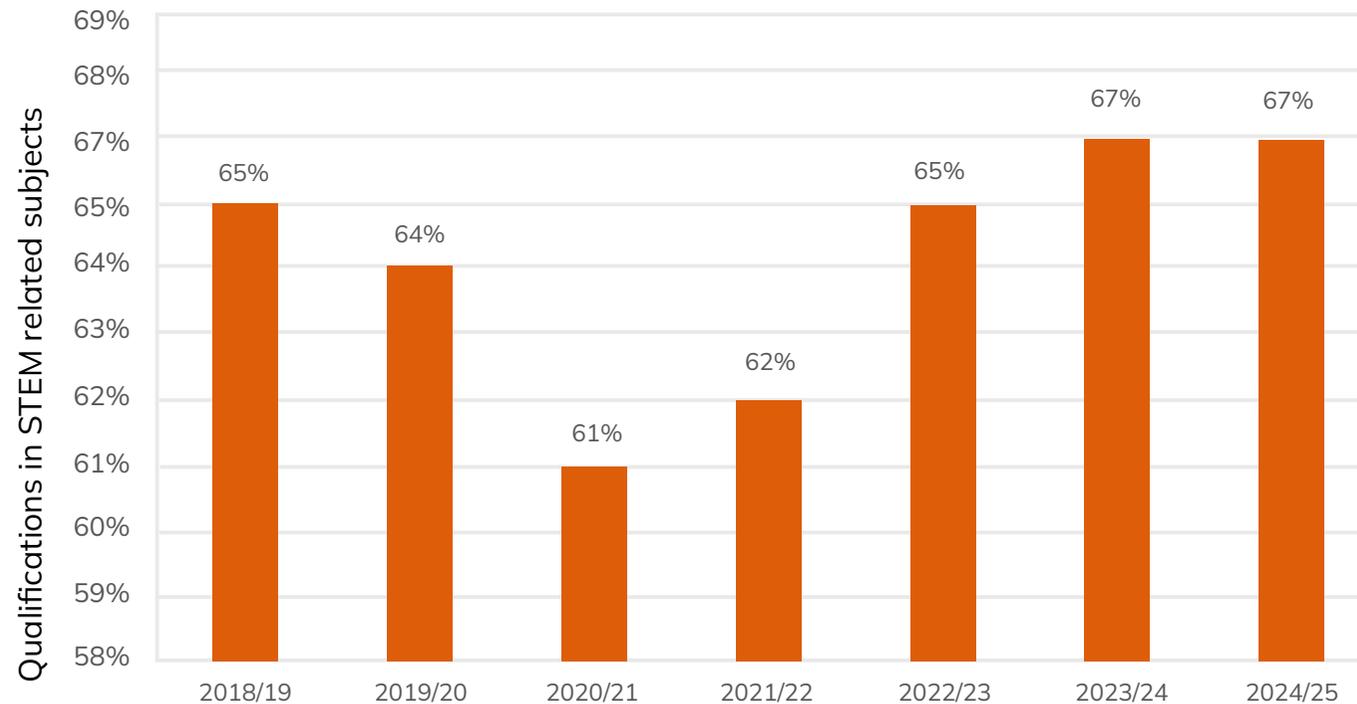


A level destination data confirms 93.4% of our learners gain positive destinations with the majority progressing into higher education. This demonstrates the significant impact the Dudley Sixth provision has on the lives of young people within the borough and the wider region: enhancing future career opportunities and benefitting the local economy. We are working to ensure that learners are fully sighted on opportunities for degree level apprenticeships as a potential destination.



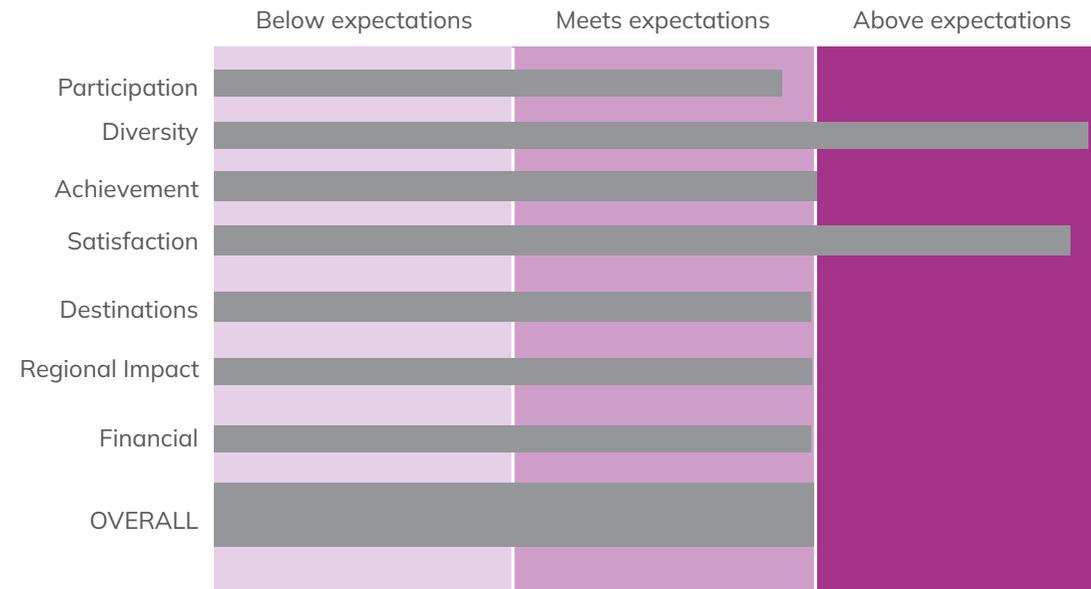
## 3.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

STEM in the curriculum - trend analysis 16-18 year old



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. Learners studying STEM is in line with 2023-24, with 67% of learners studying STEM in 2024-25. There continues to be a very strong focus on STEM provision across Dudley College of Technology including Dudley Sixth.

## 4. FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME ADULT & HE 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 or gaining higher level qualifications.



# SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

## What key outputs did we achieve?

### We engaged local adults in skills based learning:

- We engaged 3,079 adults in skills programmes in 2024/25 which is in line with the strong performance in 23/24, with an additional 394 learners studying at Level 4.
- We continue to provide an increasingly diverse and innovative curriculum offer, designed to meet local, regional, and national skills needs.
- We continue to develop our modular approach to higher level training.

### We successfully engaged learners from diverse communities:

- 1,612 learners (46.4%) were from ethnic minority groups. Our learners continue to be more diverse than the local community where 15.1% of the population are from minority groups.
- 469 learners (13.5%) reported a learning difficulty or disability.

### We maintained high achievement rates on adult skills programmes:

- Achievement rates for learners on technical and vocational programmes at Level 3 and above 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 (-1.6%).
- Achievement on Level 4 and above remain high.

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

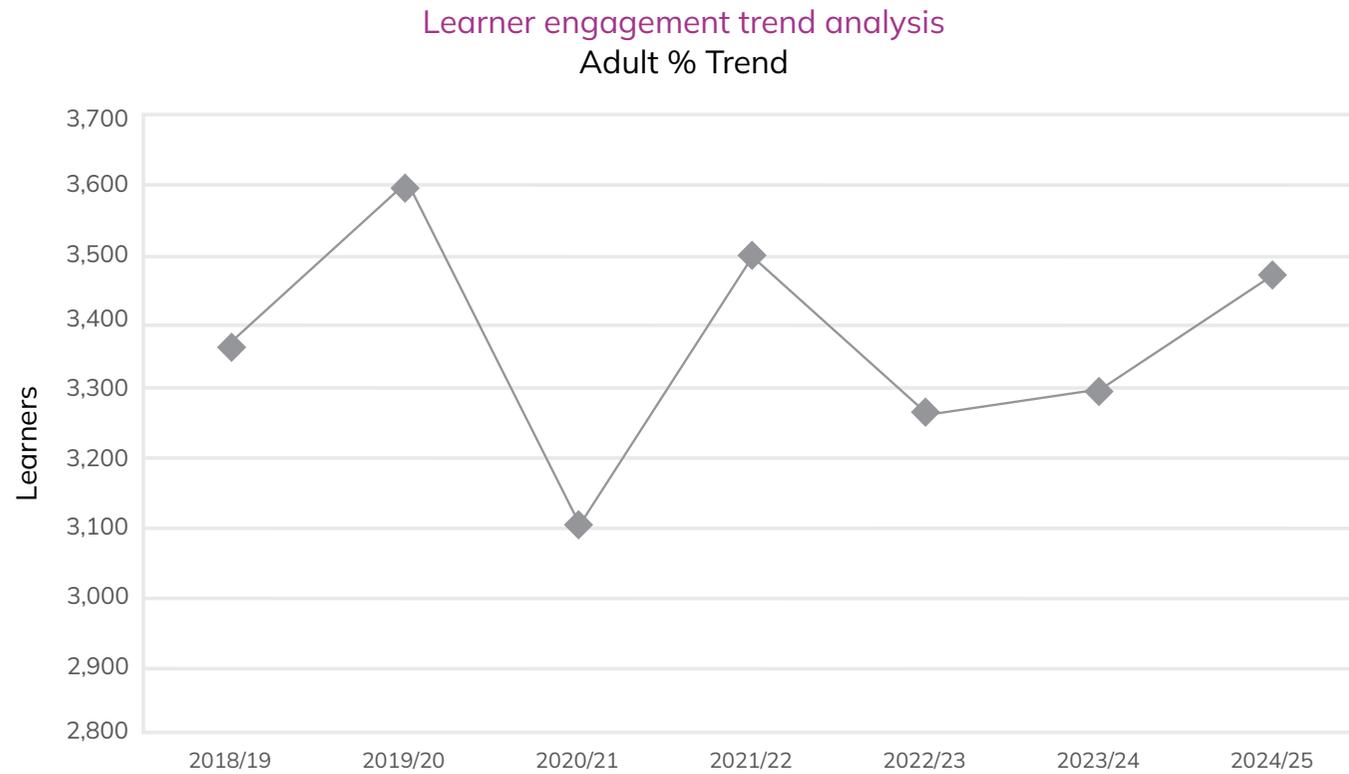
- 1598 (46%) adults were following STEM programmes of study. This is an increase on the previous year.

## What better outputs could we achieve?

- Continue to improve the retention and achievement on Level 1 and 2 courses inc maths and English.
- Continue to increase the participation in Level 3 and above courses.
- Continue to grow the number of Entry Level and Level 1 learners reporting positive destinations.



## 4.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

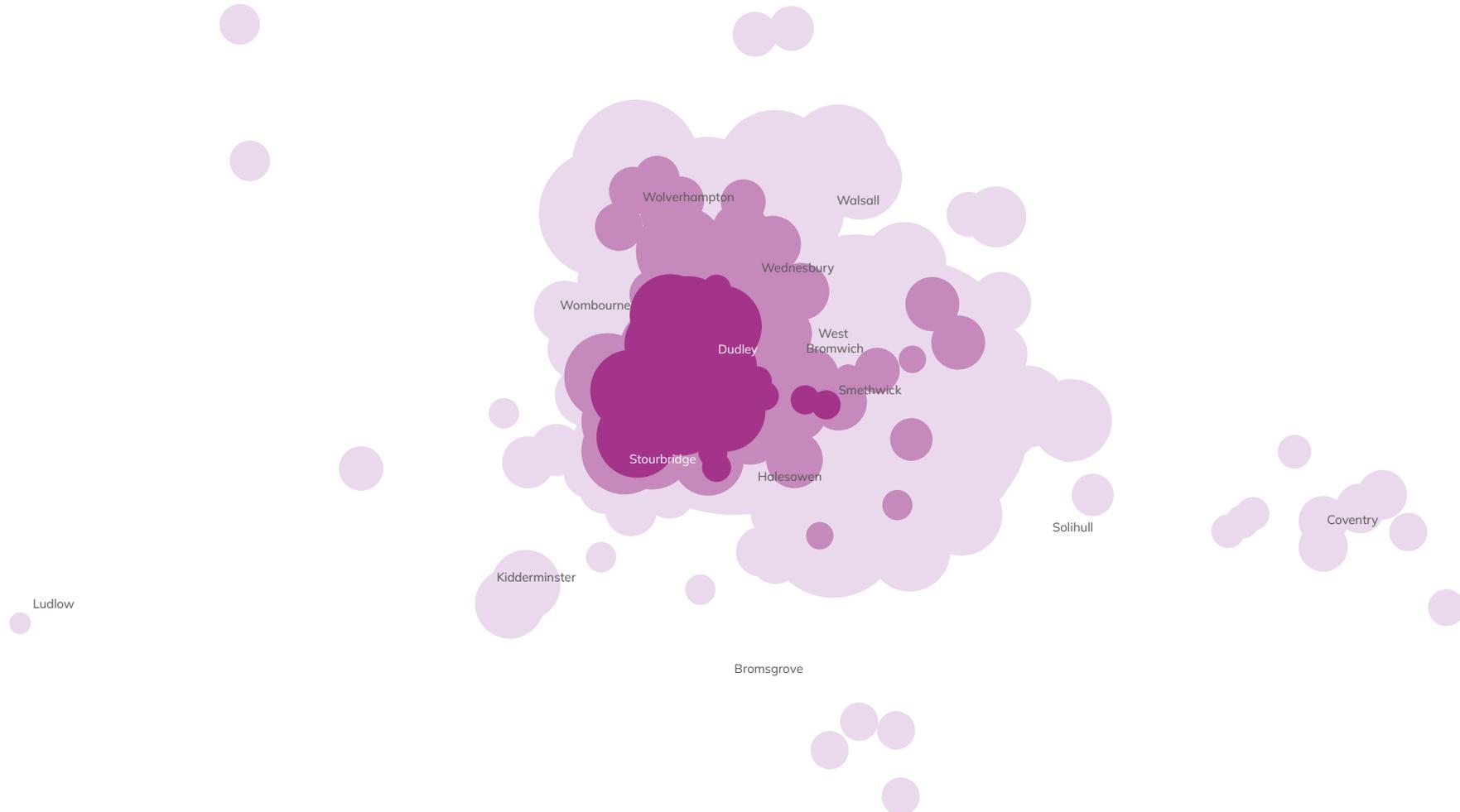


We maintained strong recruitment onto adult programmes which remains above pre-pandemic numbers.



## 4.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

Travel to learn map

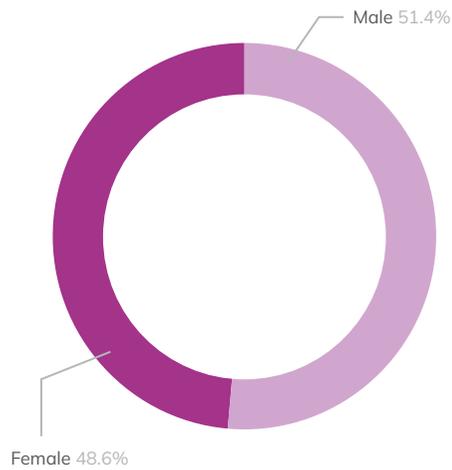


The map shows the travel to learn pattern of our adult learners in 2024/25. An increasing number of learners from the Dudley borough. There is an increasing number of adult learners looking to remain in Dudley to study rather than travel elsewhere.

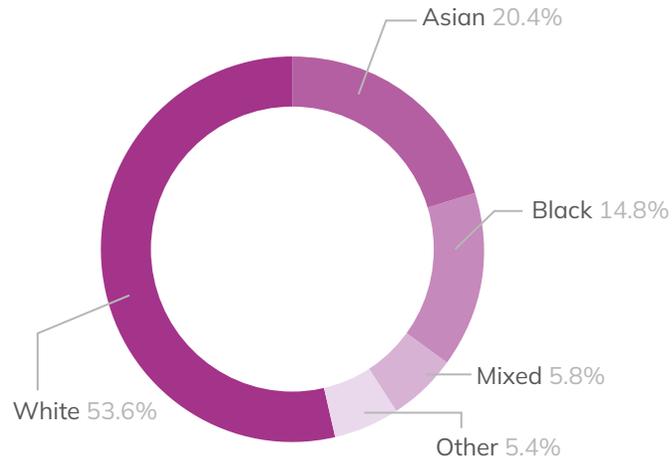


## 4.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

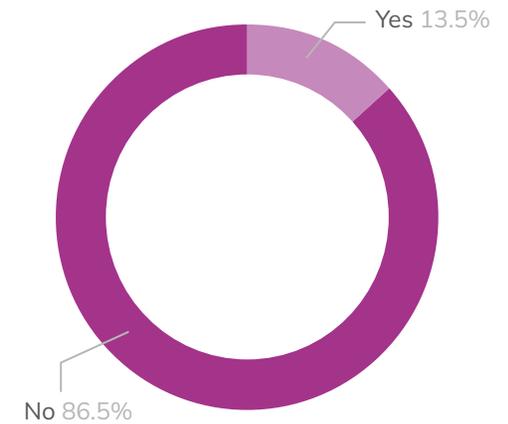
Gender



Ethnicity



Learning difficulty or disability



The college continues to support a very diverse student body. More males engaged with learning in 2024/2025. The ethnicity profile shows our adult learners as a group are increasingly more diverse than the local community. 46.4% of our learners are from minority groups. There is no significant achievement gap based on ethnicity.

When achievements of male and female learners are compared, males achieved at higher rate than females (+1.6%)

The college was pleased to support 449 adult learners with a declared learning difficulty or disability in 2024/25, 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.

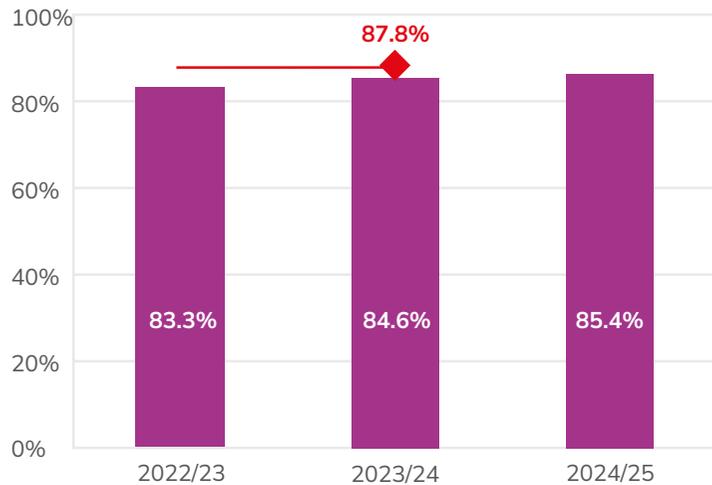
**THE COLLEGE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT A VERY DIVERSE LEARNER BODY.**





## 4.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

Achievement rate - all levels  
(excluding English & mathematics)

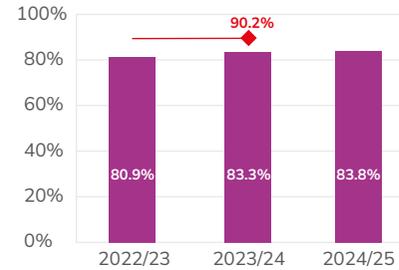


College achievement rate

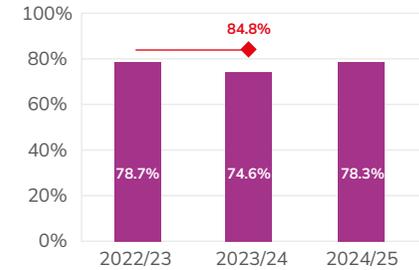


Latest published national achievement rate - GFEC

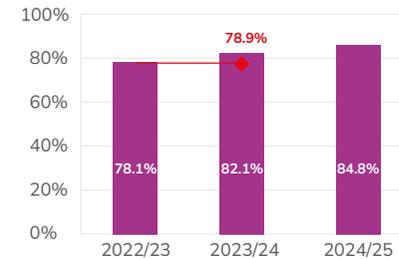
Level 1



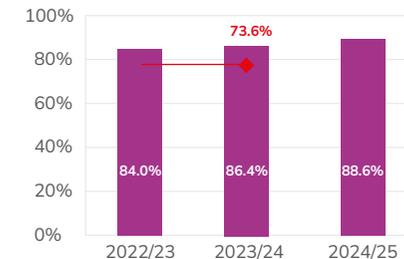
Level 2



Level 3



Level 4

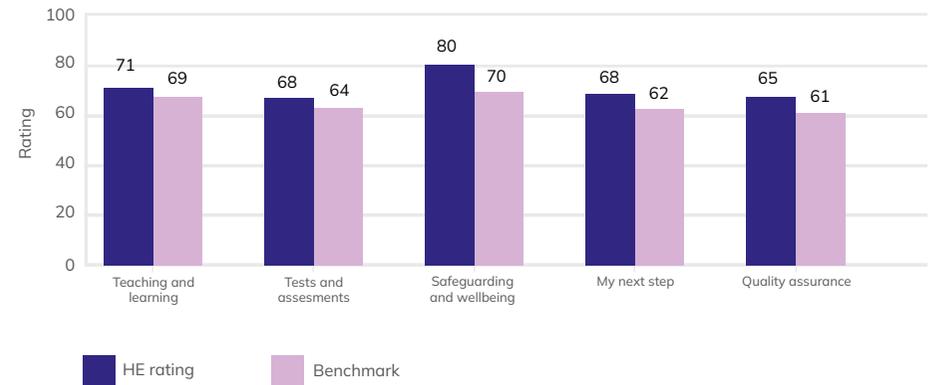
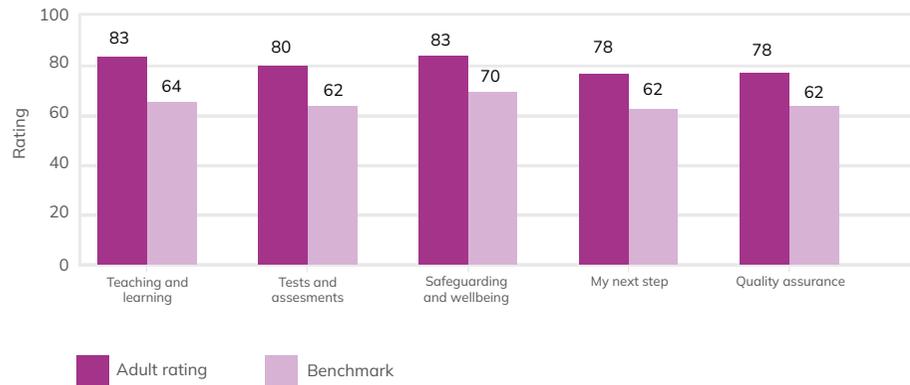


Overall achievement rates for our adult learners remain relatively stable compared with previous years, we have seen a steady increase in all levels in comparison to 2023/24. At Level 3 and 4 achievement rates are comfortably above last published national rates.

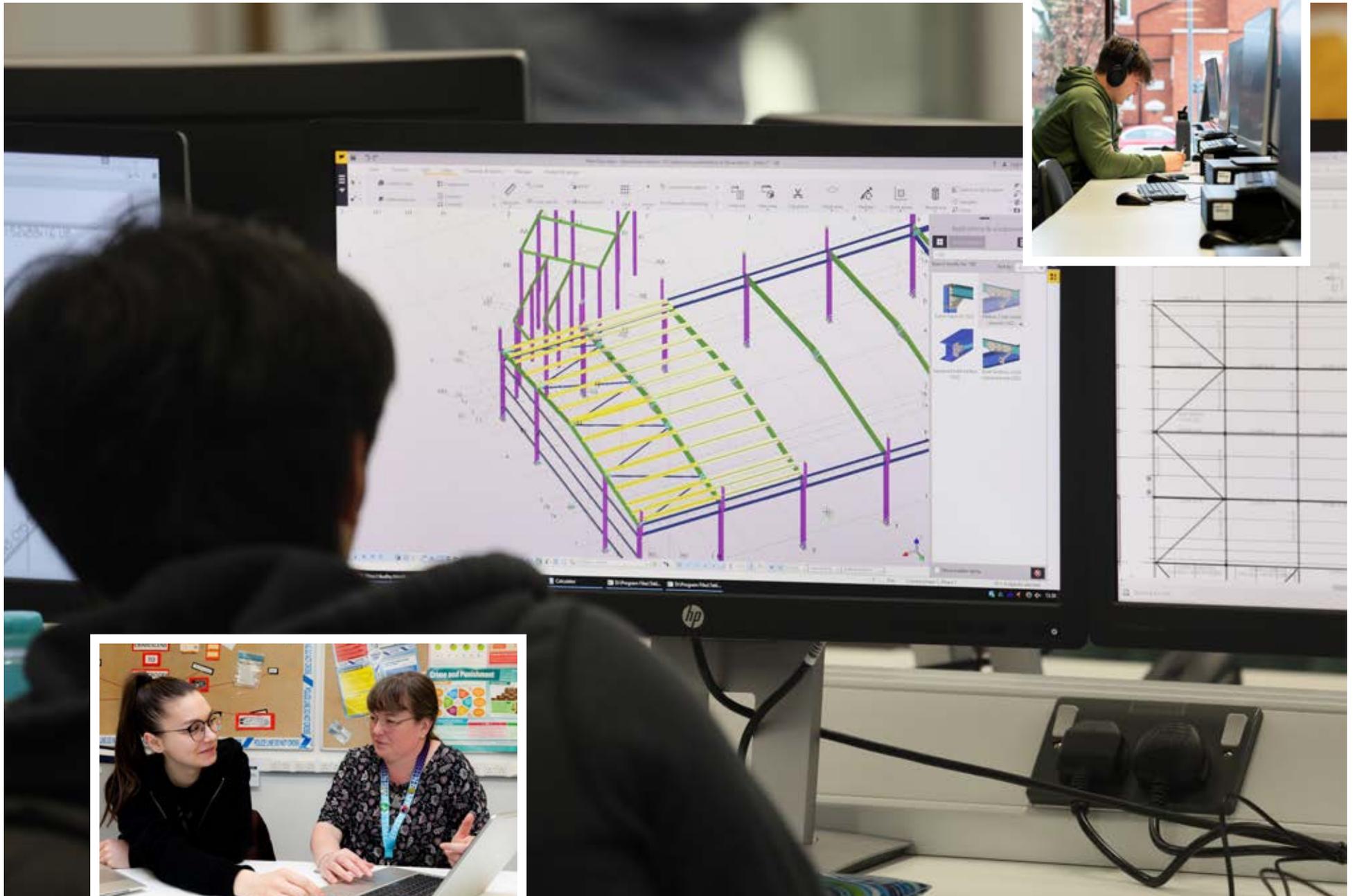


## 4.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

Year-end learner satisfaction (QDP survey)



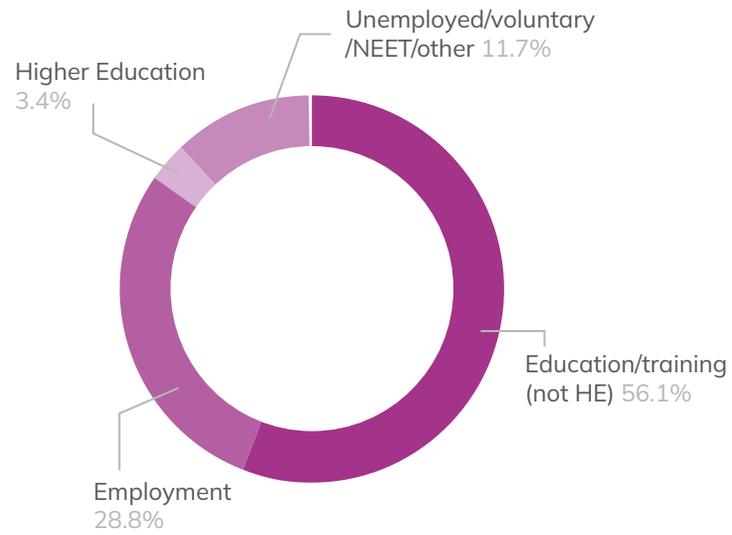
We use the external company, QDP, to administer our student satisfaction. This enables us to be benchmarked against other good providers. Adults continue to be extremely satisfied with all elements of their programmes when compared with other colleges.



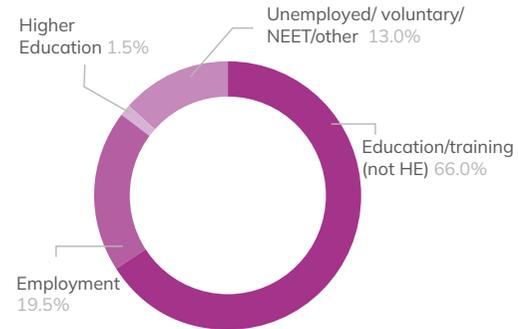


## 4.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

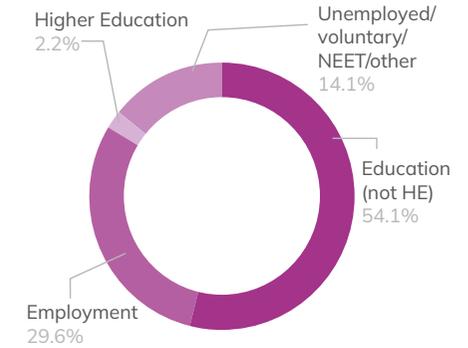
All levels



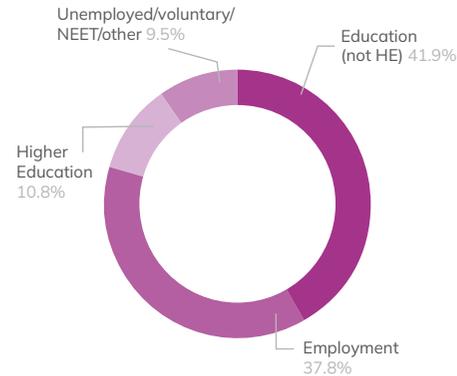
Level 1



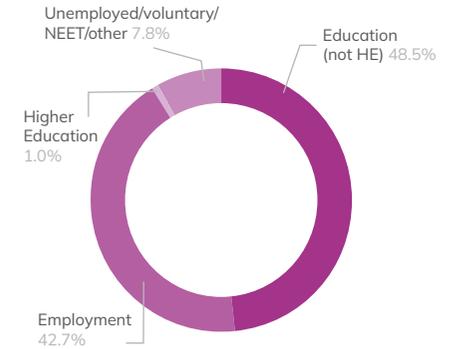
Level 2



Level 3



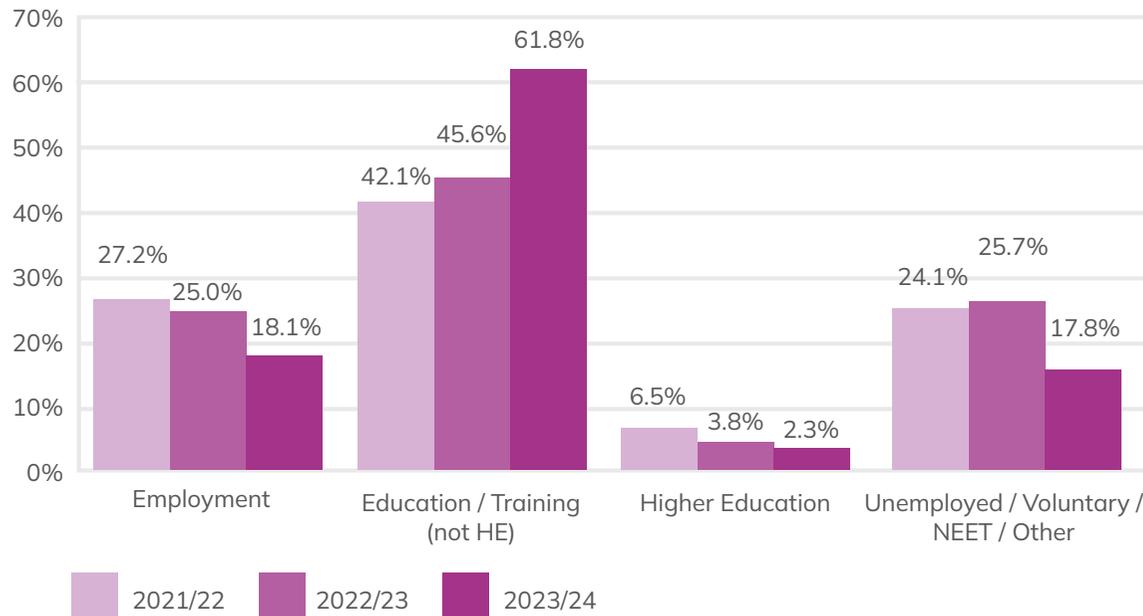
Level 4





## 4.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS CONTINUED

### Destination of unemployed adults



The destination data included in this report relates to leavers in academic year 2023/24. The college employs a permanent Destinations Officer to enable us to more proactively pursue learners who have left us to improve the tracking of our outcomes.

The destinations of adult learners studying level 4 programmes demonstrate 92.2% moving on to positive destinations. At level 3 this remains strong at 90.5%. At level 2 this drops slightly to 85.9% and at entry and level 1 sits at 86.9%.

Our Into Employment provision has been particularly strong moving 64.2% of unemployed learners into sustainable jobs. As a result, we continue to reduce the number of adults who are unemployed with us when they start to being employed when they leave us.





## 4.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

### BREAKDOWN OF LEARNER TYPE

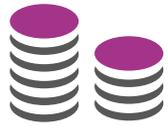
Our adult education provision can be broadly categorised into four strands:

- **STRAND 1: YOUNG ADULTS COMPLETING FULL TIME PROGRAMMES.** This provision is for a small group of learners 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 43% of our 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 to progress in work and life.
- **STRAND 4: HIGHER SKILLS PROGRAMMES FOR ADULTS.** These are programmes aimed at supporting adults in our region to gain qualifications and skills at Level 4 and above.

The chart shows how our adult learners are split between these four strands. The figures demonstrate a three-year trend in increasing the numbers of adult studying technical and professional programmes from 38% in 2023/24 to 43% in 2024/25 demonstrating our continued work to meet local and regional skills needs of adults in the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Adult learners by strand

ROW LABELS	Total Learners	%
1 - Full Time	5	0%
2 - Technical Professional	1,479	43%
3 - Essential Skills	1,595	46%
4 - Higher Skills	394	11%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,473</b>	<b>100%</b>



# 4.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTINUED

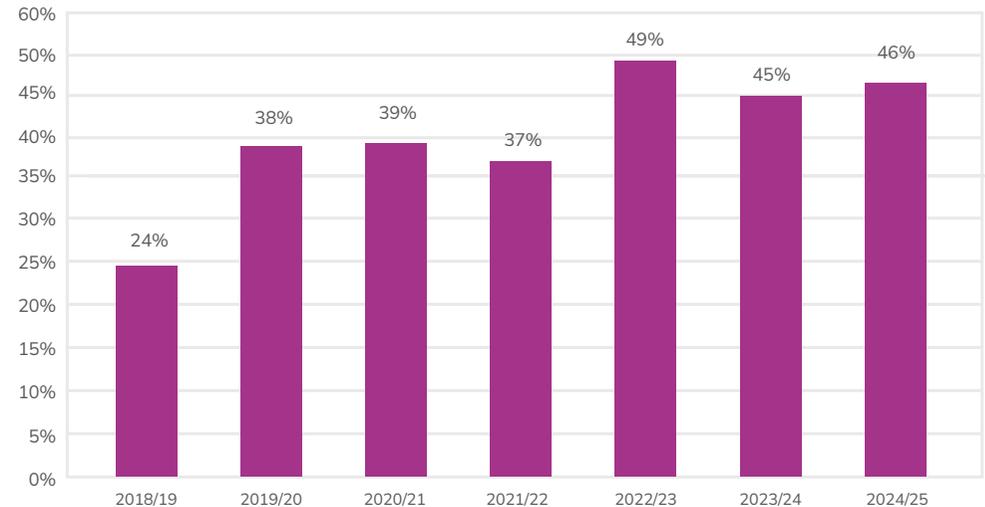
## HAVING AN IMPACT LOCALLY

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 (51%). 98% of our adults are from Dudley or the neighbouring boroughs demonstrating the impact we are having locally.

### Adult learners based within region

ROW LABELS	Total Learners	%
Dudley	1,788	51%
Other West Midlands	1,638	47%
East Midlands	3	0%
London	5	0%
North East	1	0%
North West	8	0%
South East	7	0%
Scotland	3	0%
Wales	1	0%
Unknown	19	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,473</b>	<b>100%</b>

## STEM in the curriculum – trend analysis Adult Classroom % STEM

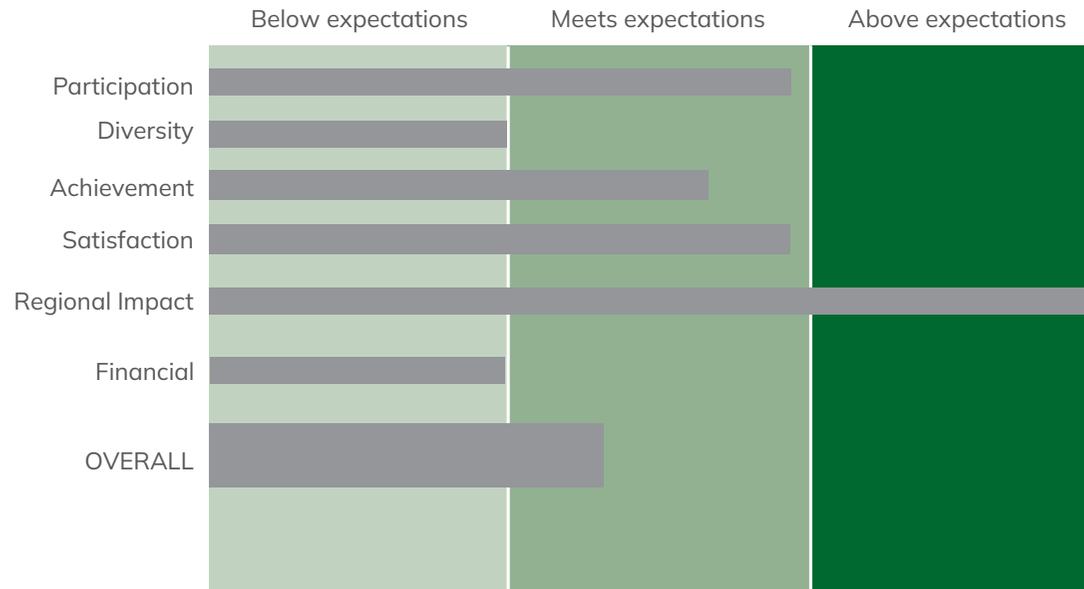


The local economy relies on a workforce with high level skills and skills in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

The chart above shows the percentage of qualifications completed by adult learners that were in STEM related subjects. In 2024/25, 46% of our adults followed STEM programmes of study, an increase of 1% 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 reasons which are out of our control. Pass rates for those apprentices who complete their course remain very high. The alignment of our provision to regional skills needs continue to be a strength.



# SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

## What key outputs did we achieve?

**Local participation in skills-based learning has been broadly consistent with previous years:**

Overall recruitment is slightly down compared to 2023-4 levels, which tracks with the national picture, where higher level starts have masked a decrease in intermediate and advanced starts. Numbers engaged are:

- We engaged 772 young people in college-based apprenticeships
- We engaged 1044 adults in college-based apprenticeships
- In total we engaged 1816 individuals in apprenticeships.

**We have supported a high number of apprentices to successfully pass their chosen apprenticeship:**

- Pass rates for apprentices who remain on programme are very high (97.5%).
- Overall achievement rates for apprenticeships have been remained similar to previous year at 61.2%(61.8%)
- All age achievements at intermediate level have improved by 4.7% on the previous year

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

- 60% of apprentices were following STEM programmes of study, which is a 5% increase from the previous year, demonstrating a 6-year upward trend.
- We are meeting key outcomes in the WMCA high priority areas, including Advanced Manufacturing, Health and medical tech, Construction, and clean tech and energy

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

- Apprentices report their experience at Dudley College is good, with survey responses in all instances above the national benchmark.

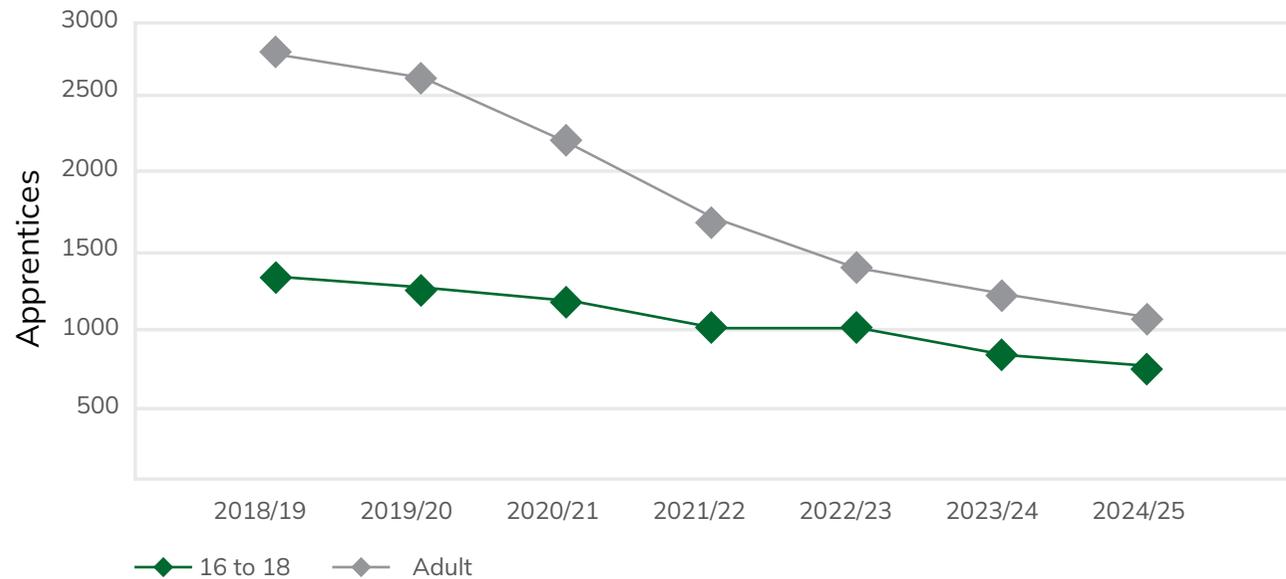
## What better outputs could we achieve?

- Retention and achievement rates on advanced and higher apprenticeships, and for apprentices aged 19+, need to improve
- Narrow the achievement gap for Black and Mixed heritage apprentices and those declaring a learning difficulty/disability
- Improve the communication and reporting with employers
- Improve the communication between tutors and assessors in a minority of curriculum areas.



## 5.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

Apprentice engagement and trend analysis - all Apprentices

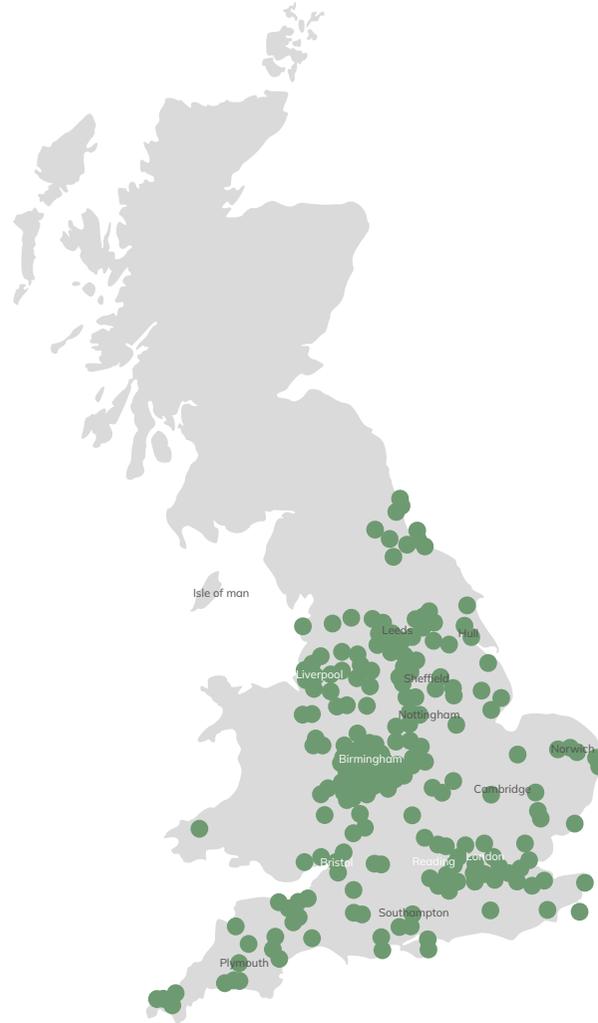


There has been a decline in participation levels for apprentices at Level 2 and Level 3. This has been seen nationally, as increases in higher level enrolments have masked national figures. The actual participation at Dudley College for 16-18 apprentices was 772 in 2024/25 and the number of 19+ apprentices was 1,044, giving 1,816 apprentices in total. The decline in college numbers is also reflective of the strategic direction to move away from subcontracted provision.



## 5.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED

### Apprentice provision

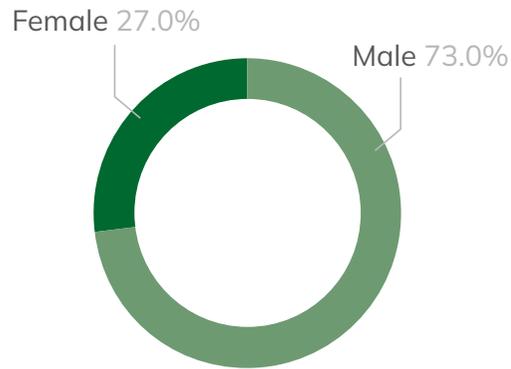


The heat map shows the home location of all apprentices. Most apprentices are following a day or block release programme and are based locally in the West Midlands Region. Some of our specialist apprentice standards, such as Geospatial Engineering and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, engage a wider national employer base. The adult apprenticeships are also generally based locally however there are pockets of focussed activity in other regions due to specific initiatives with key partner employers, including national NHS trusts.



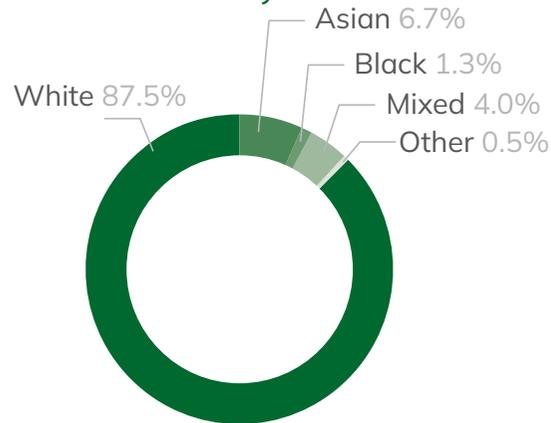
## 5.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Gender mix



In 2024/25 the apprenticeship cohort continued to be predominantly white male as in previous years. The participation rates between male and female have remained similar, males 73.1% and females 26.7%. There is a significant difference in achievement between male and female apprentices, with females (74.3%) achieving higher than males (55.5%).

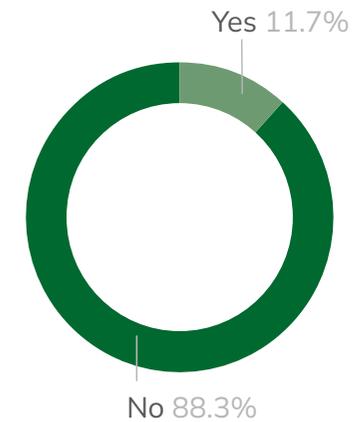
Ethnicity mix



While our BAME apprenticeship participation profile is broadly representative of the communities we serve and is consistent with the previous year at 12%, it is significantly lower than other College student cohorts, such as classroom-based provision.

Whilst there have been some improvements in narrowing the achievement gap for BAME apprentices from the previous year, here is a significant difference in the overall achievement rates of black (-21.2%) and mixed heritage (-6.7%) apprentices. The college will investigate the difference in achievement for these cohorts and implement an action plan to support these apprentices to ensure that the gap is narrowed.

Learning difficulty or disability

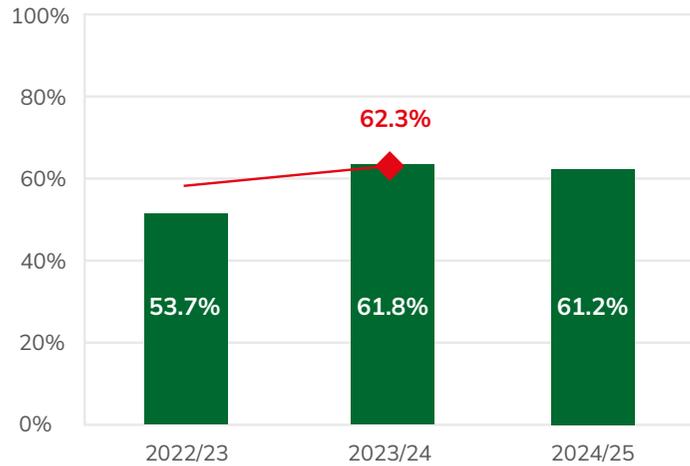


We supported 197 apprentices who declared a special educational need or disability (SEND) in 2024/25, which at 11.7% is a marginal decrease on the previous year (-1.4%). This year there is a significant difference in achievement amongst 16 to 18 apprentices who declare a disability and those who do not -(20.7%). This has not been the case for the past 3 years so the College will investigate and take action to address this.



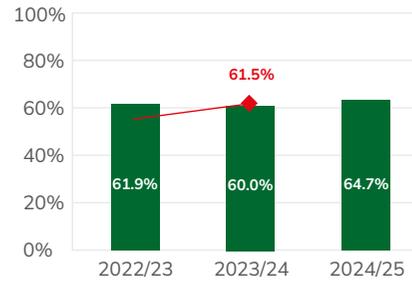
## 5.3 OUTCOMES FOR APPRENTICES

### Overall achievement rate - all Apprenticeships

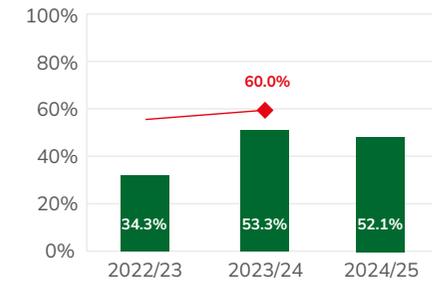


■ College achievement rate  
 ◆ Latest published national achievement rate - GFEC

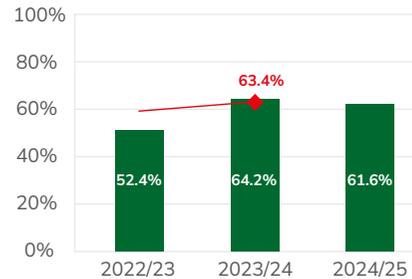
### Intermediate Apprenticeships



### Higher Apprenticeships



### Advanced Apprenticeships



Overall achievement rates for Apprenticeships have remained on par with the previous year at 61.2%. The performance of Apprenticeships across the different levels remains in line with performance in the previous year.

Retention is the biggest factor affecting achievement rates. Most commonly due to changes in employment status. The top three reasons for withdrawal are: 'Personal:

'I gained employment/job change', 'Loss of job/Unemployed' and 'Redundancy (with official employer evidence)'. Even removing these apprentices from data shows the significant impact on achievement (increasing achievement by +11.7% overall).

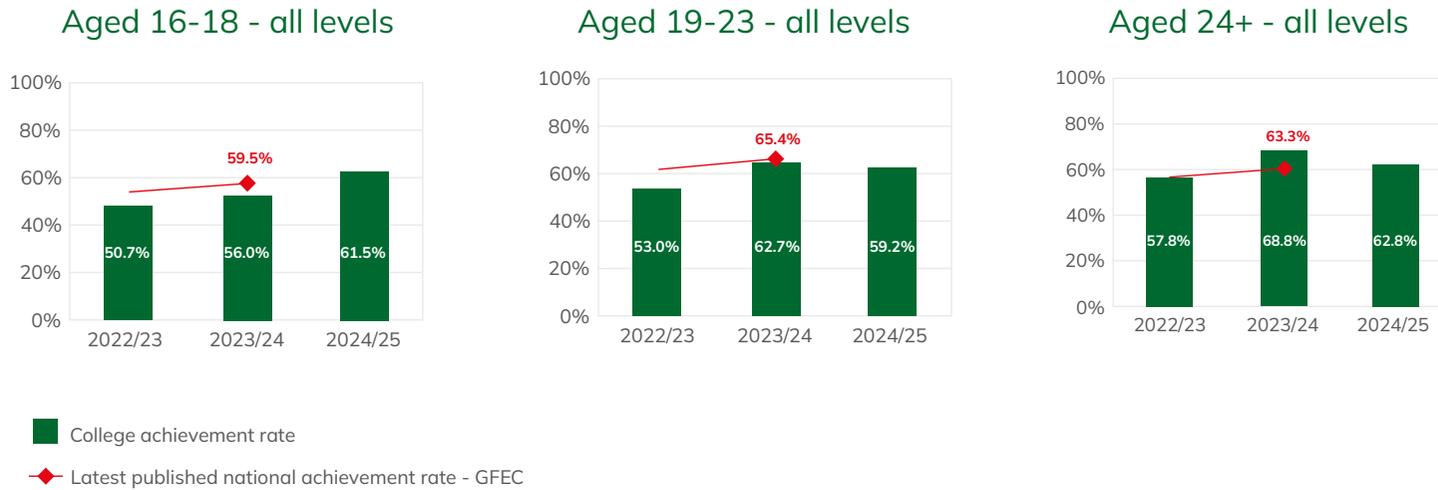
For those apprentices who do remain on programme, their pass rate is extremely high, at 97.5%.





## 5.3 OUTCOMES FOR APPRENTICES CONTINUED

### AGE GROUP ACHIEVEMENT

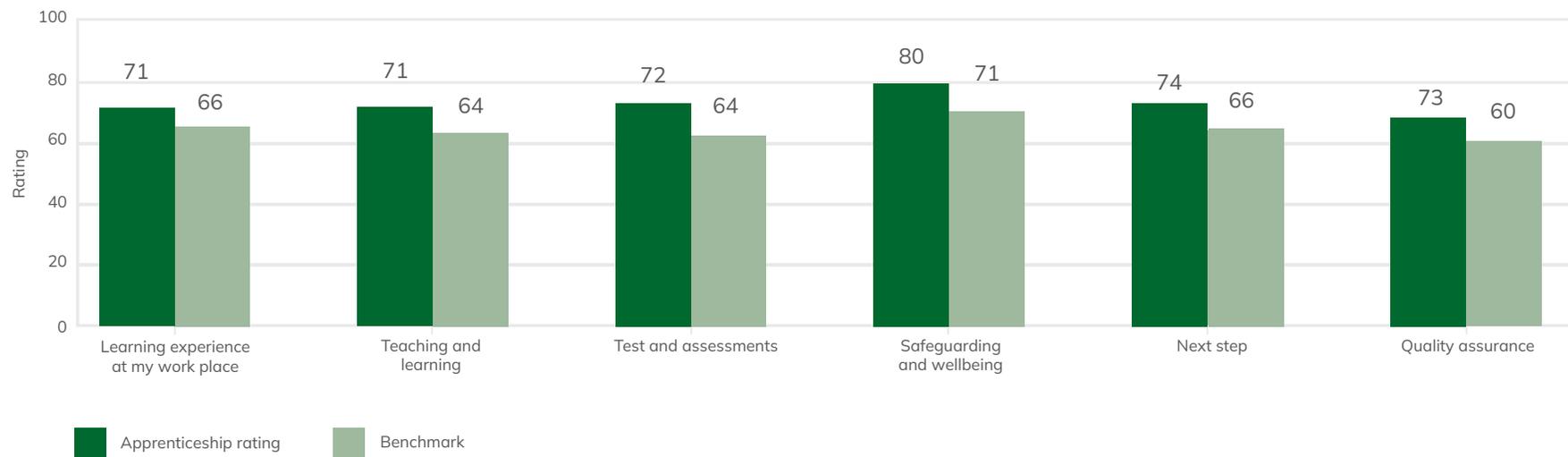


Analysis by age group shows there has been an improvement in 16-18 of an increase of 5.5%, 19-23 shows a decrease of 3.5% and, 24+ age group also shows a decrease of 6% compared to previous year.



## 5.4 LEARNER AND EMPLOYER SATISFACTION

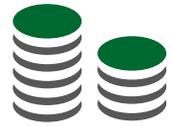
### Apprenticeship End of Year Survey



Apprentices report that they believe their experience at Dudley College is good, with survey responses in all instances above the national benchmark.

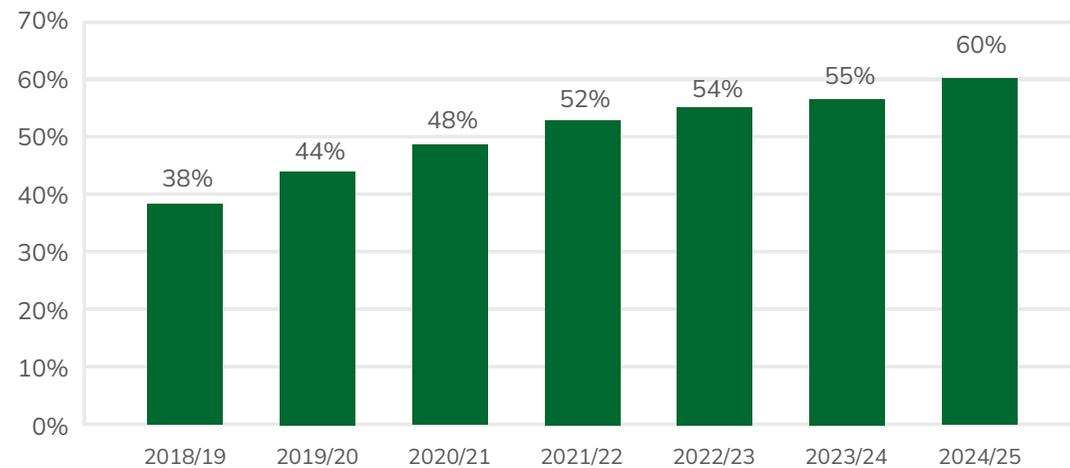






## 5.5 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

STEM Apprenticeships - trend analysis



The Black Country and wider West Midlands economy relies on a workforce with high level skills, including STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The charts above show the percentage of apprenticeship standards completed by apprentices in STEM related subjects 60% (+5%) of all apprentices followed STEM apprenticeships.

## 6. HIGH NEEDS LEARNERS BALANCED SCORECARD



The overall performance of this key client group is 'meeting 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

- 169 learners were supported through high needs funding in 24/25.
- The number of high needs learners studying at Level 2 and 3 increased in 24/25

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

- Overall achievement rates for main programmes, show that high needs students achieve at a comparable rate with their peers, with those studying at Level 3 achieving better than peers by 6.7%.
- There is no significant difference in overall achievements rates between high needs learners in discrete provision, compared to high needs learners in mainstream provision.
- 37.9% of learners receiving high needs funding are studying STEM subjects, maintaining the level of engagement in STEM subjects for high needs learners

### We successfully engaged high needs learners from diverse communities

- 14.2% of high needs funded learners were from ethnic minority groups in 24/25, which is reflective of our local community.

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

- 70.6% of high need learners progress onto the next level of qualification
- 88.3% of learners receiving high needs funding remained in education or gained employment.

### We provide a positive experience for young people with High Needs

- Learners receiving high needs funding rate their satisfaction above national benchmark for teaching and learning, tests and assessments, safeguarding and well-being, support with next steps and quality assurance.

## What better outputs could we achieve?

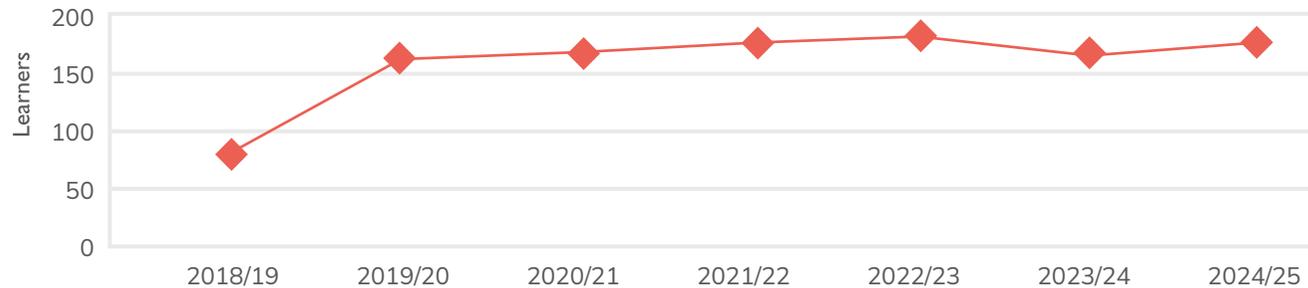
- We will continue to work on English and maths, in our discrete provision, to close the gap in achievement for high needs learners compared to their peers





## 6.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES

### High Needs Classroom Trend



Headline numbers as part of overall College cohort

	High Needs	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Participation in Education and Training	Yes	86	162	165	173	177	165	169

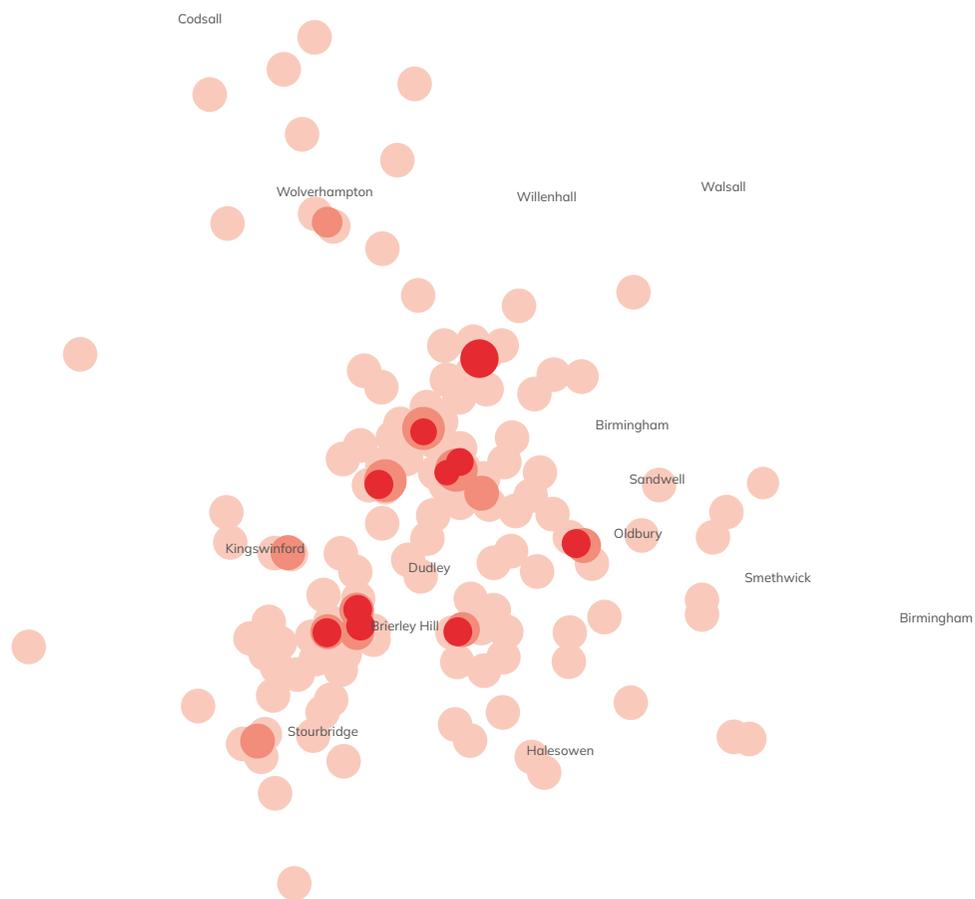
By level: Counts learners once on their highest level of enrolment only

Level	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Entry	65	76	63	56	47
1	28	29	27	27	30
2	44	45	60	67	73
3	28	23	29	18	19
4+	0	0	0	0	0
X	0	0	0	0	0

High needs students study with the college at all levels that high needs funding is applicable., with the number of high needs enrolments remaining consistent in 24/25, 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.



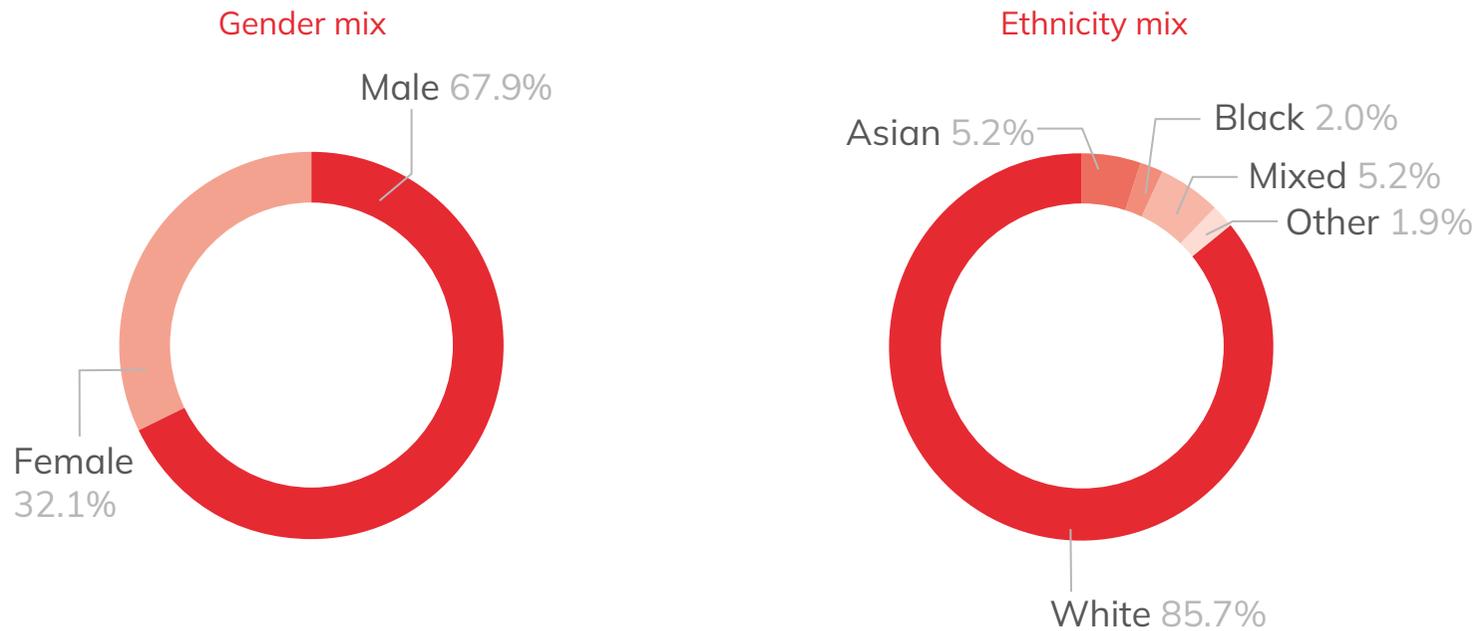
## 6.1 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES CONTINUED



The map shows the travel to learn pattern for our High Needs learners in 2024/25. Most learners are from Dudley borough, as would be expected, with learners also travelling from Wolverhampton, 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 attracts learners to our provision and enables them to achieve, in line with their peers.



## 6.2 IMPACT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



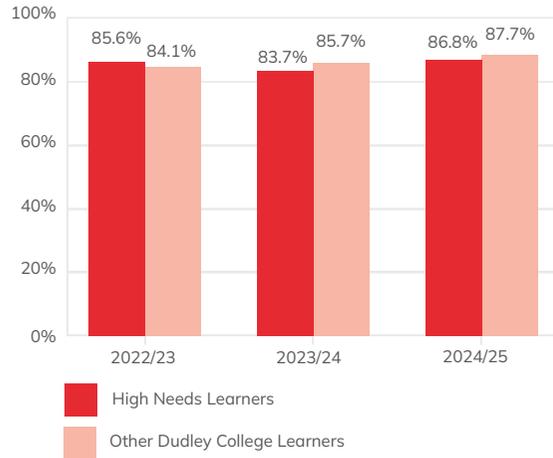
For high needs learners there are more male learners than female, however, this reflects the overall male/female split within the wider College. We continue to support a diverse cohort of learners with 14.2% of high needs learners being from minority groups which is representative of our local community. Overall achievement rates across ethnicity and gender shows no significant gaps.



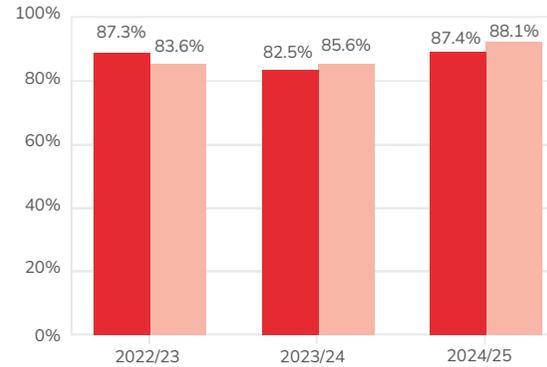
## 6.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

### Achievement rates - all programmes excluding English & mathematics

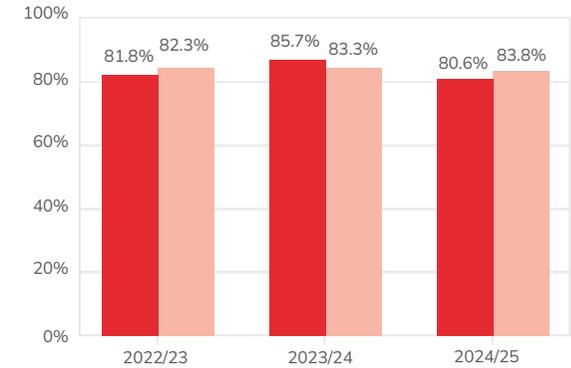
Overall achievement rate (all levels)  
compared to wider College



High needs achievement rate  
Level 1

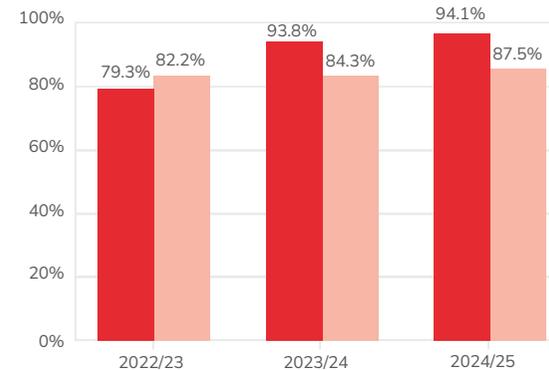


High needs achievement rate  
Level 2



Achievement rates for 24/25 show an overall increase of 4% for high needs learners compared to 23/24, with a significant increase in Level 2 achievement by 15.8% and Level 1 and 3 remaining consistent. Learners achieve and make good progress, which is seen by the high level of enrolments of high needs learners on Level 2 and 3 courses in 24/25.

High needs achievement rate  
Level 3

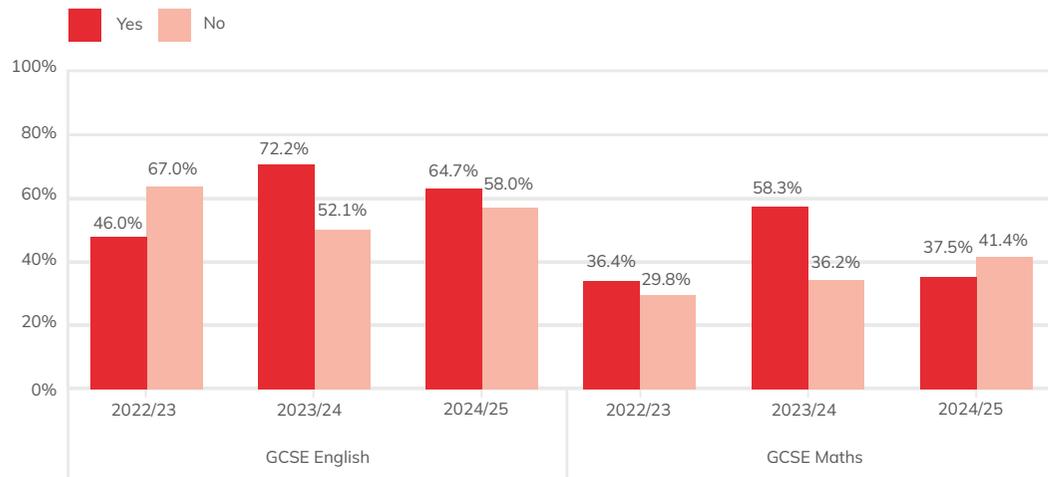




## 6.3 OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS CONTINUED

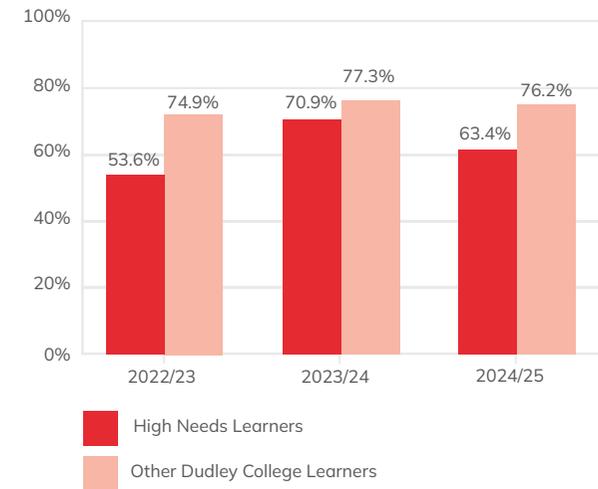
### GCSE & Functional skills English & mathematics achievement rate – all levels

**GCSE**  
16-18 GCSE grade improvement



Achievement rates for GCSE English and maths for those with high needs dropped by 21%, however, there is no significant difference in achievement compared to their peers.

**Functional Skills**  
16-18 Overall functional skills achievement rate - All Levels



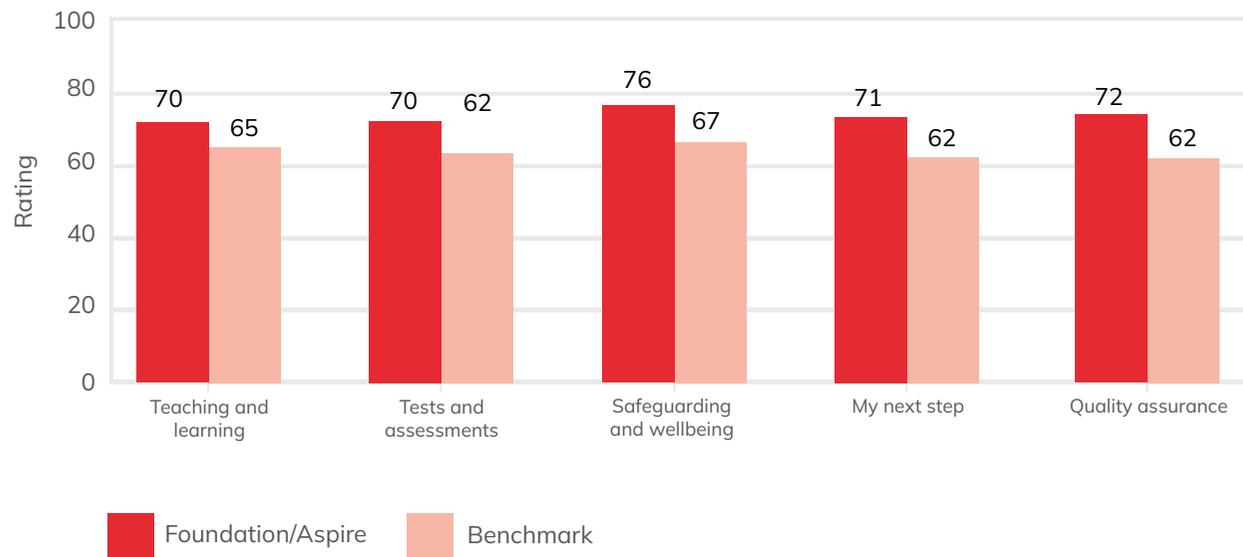
In 24/25 the gap in English and maths achievement rates for those with high needs increased compared to 23/24 results. Work will take place in 25/26 to ensure the English and maths programmes for learners receiving high needs funding meets their individual needs and close this gap.





## 6.4 LEARNER SATISFACTION

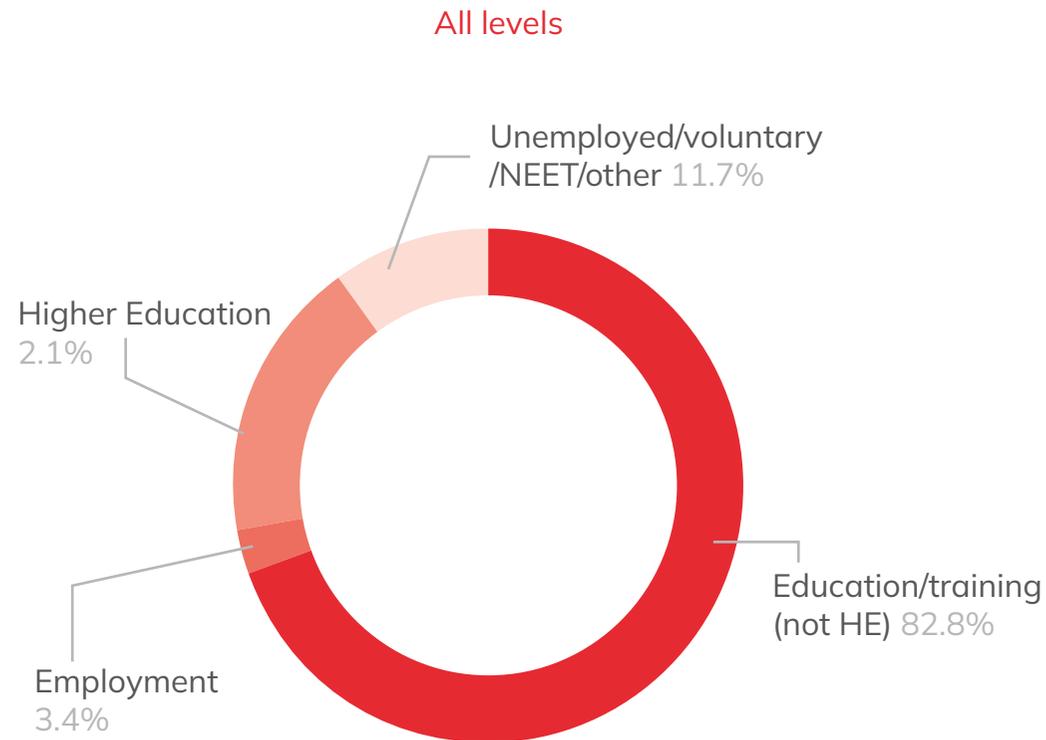
High Needs Learner Satisfaction (QDP survey)



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 24/25 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.



## 6.5 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

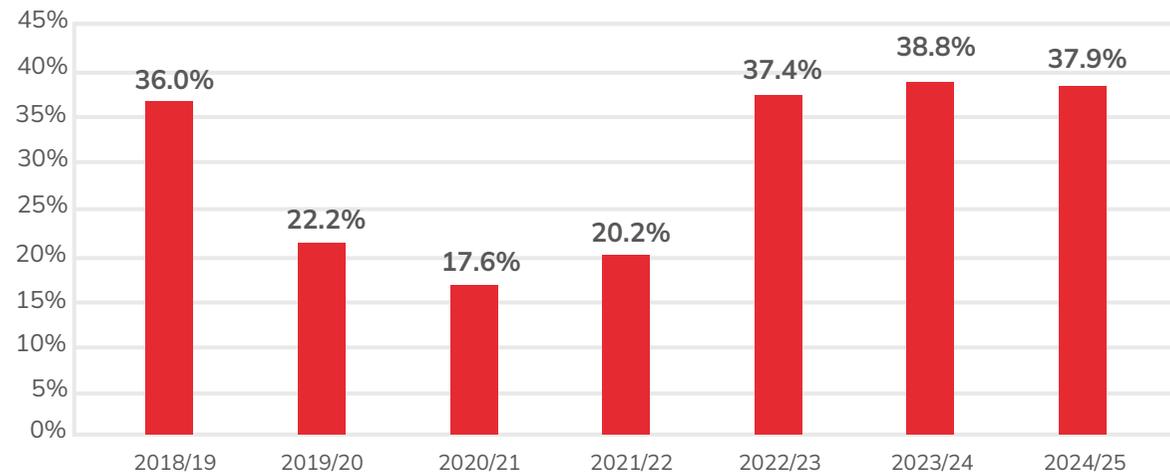


We successfully support many of our high needs' students into positive destinations, with the majority, 82.8%, going onto further education and training. 2.1% into higher education and 3.4% into work. Of the remaining 12.3% many go into voluntary work or adult social care which based on their starting points is a positive destination.



## 6.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

STEM in the curriculum – trend analysis



In 24/25 the number of high needs learners enrolled onto STEM programmes remained consistent with 23/24, following a 3-year trend of increase. This demonstrates our ongoing focus on ensuring high needs learners access the STEM curriculum, alongside their peers.



## 6.6 IMPACT ON REGIONAL SKILLS AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTINUED

### Progression to advanced level – trend analysis



There was a significant improvement in learner progression in 24/25, with 70.6% of high needs learners progressing onto the next level of study. 20.6% 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. 8.8% 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.



# 7. FINANCIAL HEALTH INDICATORS

## OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE'S FINANCIAL POSITION

The college has invested substantially in its estate in recent 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 improved its financial position, creating a stronger balance sheet and 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 our successful 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's finance strategy has focused on building a resilient balance sheet to ensure we are able to withstand potential financial pressures and continue to invest in capital and resources to support a positive learner experience. Our key performance indicators demonstrate performance that is at or exceeds the FE Commissioner recommended benchmarks (with the exception of debt service cover which is narrowly below). Further, the Department for Education (DfE) thresholds for Good have been exceeded and we are now approaching the threshold for Outstanding against the key financial health measures.

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' is maintained as a minimum in 2025/26.

The current ratio (as a measure of short-term liquidity) continues to improve and at 1.69 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 51 at the July 2025 year-end, above the FE Commissioner benchmark of 40. 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 2026.

The college continues to carefully manage its cost base, and this has resulted in an improved EBITDA as a percentage of income of 8.2% (£4.4m). The continued benefits of good cost control means that EBITDA is well above the FEC recommended benchmark of 6%.

The College continues to reduce its levels of borrowing through loan repayments and reducing any reliance on finance leases which up to 2024 were used to finance IT equipment. Borrowing is now 22% of turnover.

## 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 grown 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 adopted a prudent approach in resource planning, and this has meant that staffing budgets have been met, and non-pay costs are within budget. Combined with increases in income from 2023/24 and 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 8% of income by July 2025.

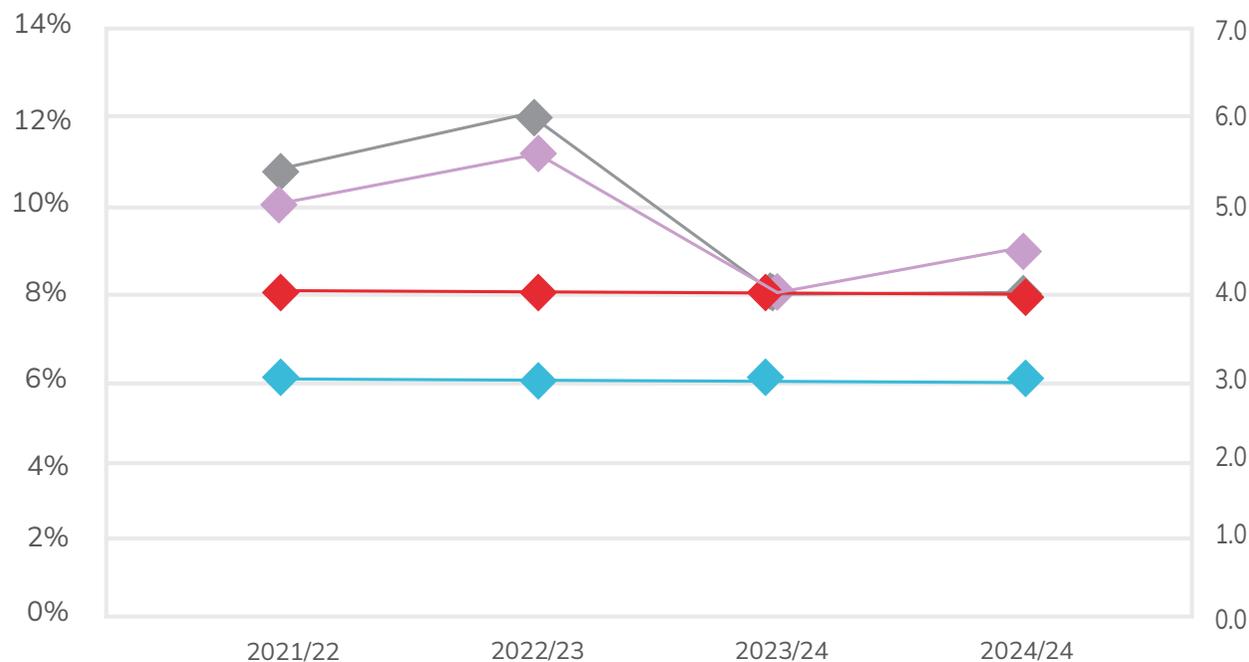
Cash generated from operations, alongside a controlled capital expenditure programme, is ensuring the college meets its longer-term financial objective of growing cash and removing any reliance on existing working capital facilities by 2025, whilst maintaining the milestone of Good financial health. The Corporation agreed a financial strategy in 2024 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 2025 all KPIs were achieved, and loan covenants were comfortably met; this level of performance is expected to continue into 2026.

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 make major improvements to the estate. A joint project with DMBC and the University of Worcester to construct a new Dudley Higher Education and Skills 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 to economic uncertainty and the college has put mechanisms in place to monitor recruitment against plans on a real-time basis. This allows the college to quickly respond to variances in income either through generating additional opportunities or to reduce costs.



## 7.1 OPERATING PERFORMANCE



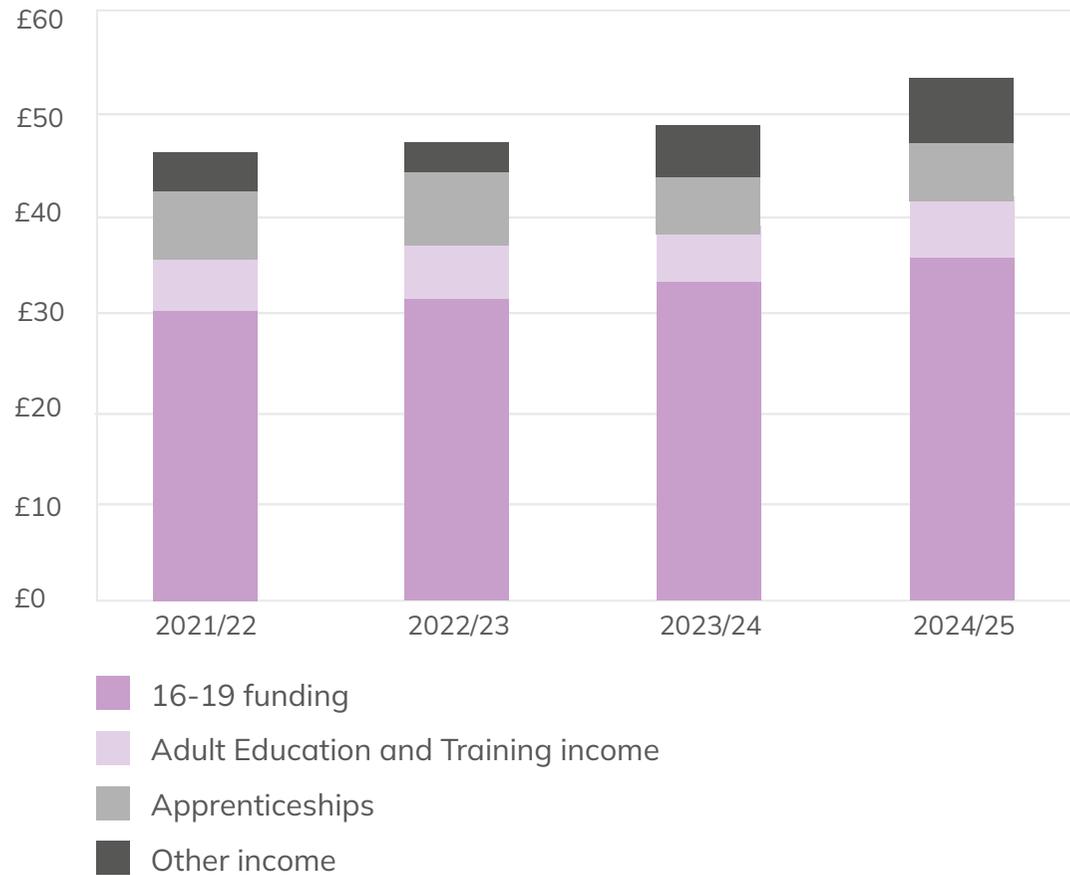
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
EBITDA as a % of income	11%	12%	8%	8%
DfE Outstanding benchmark	8%	8%	8%	8%
FEC benchmark	6%	6%	6%	6%
EBITDA as £m	5.0	5.7	4.0	4.4

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.

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. At 8.2%, EBITDA has exceeded the FEC benchmark of 6% and the DfE benchmark of Outstanding of 8%.

## 7.2 TOTAL INCOME

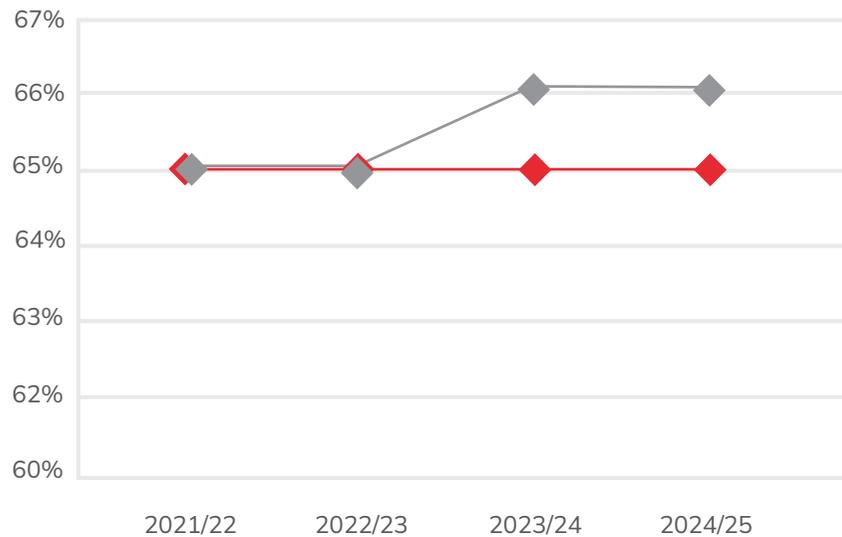
Total Income (£m)



We continue to see increases in income since 2021. The increase in income in 2025 is largely driven through higher levels of DfE funding for students aged 16-19 and this will continue to grow in 2026, based on prior year student numbers. Apprenticeship income has dropped slightly, and this is a managed withdrawal from sub-contracting – the College now delivers all training through its own staff base.

## 7.3 STAFF COSTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF INCOME

Staff Cost as % of Income

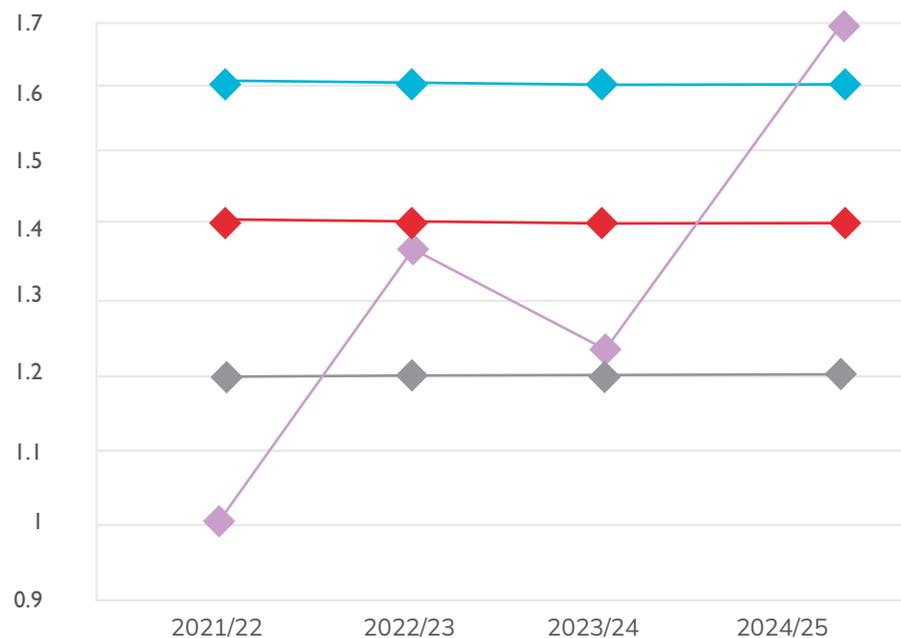


The College is proud to continue to award increases in pay that meet the AoC recommended pay awards for staff. Like all employers, the College has been impacted by increased national insurance contributions and high teachers' pension costs. We are pleased therefore that our pay costs as a percentage of income remain close to the low FEC benchmark of 65%. Pay costs continue to be tightly controlled and we are careful to ensure 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.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
■ Staff costs as % of income	65%	65%	66%	66%
■ FEC benchmark	65%	65%	65%	65%

## 7.4 ADJUSTED CURRENT RATIO

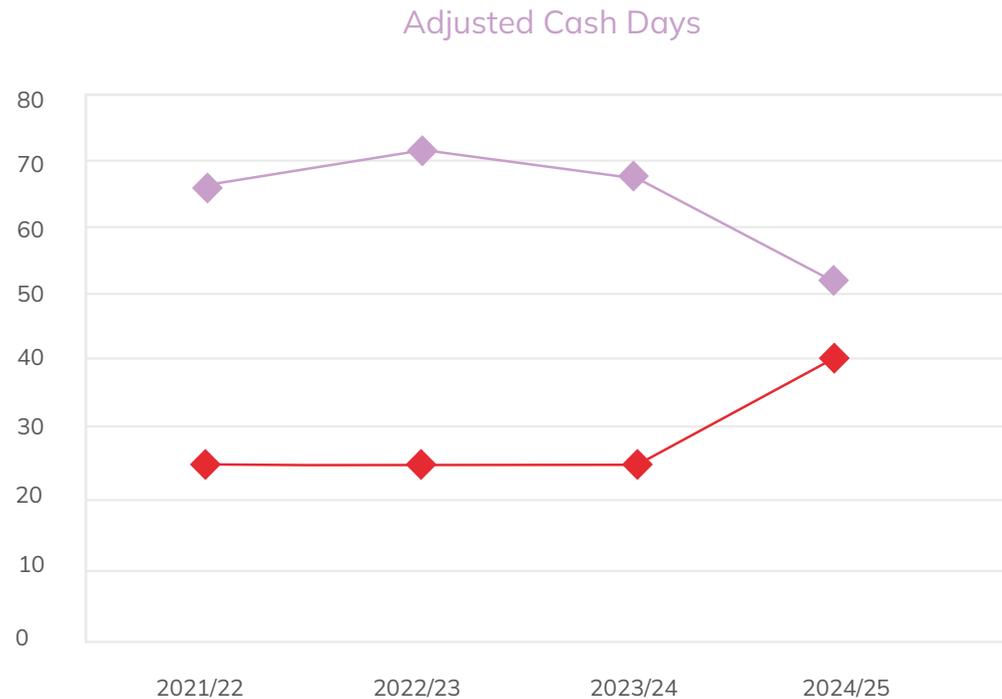


	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Adjusted current Ratio	1.01	1.38	1.21	1.69
DfE Good benchmark	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
DfE Outstanding benchmark	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
FEC benchmark	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4

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, 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 FEC benchmark is 1.4, which the College has exceeded in 2025. The DfE Outstanding threshold of 1.6 has also been exceeded.

The increase in income and careful cost management 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 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 borrowing.

## 7.5 CASH DAYS



	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Adjusted Cash Days	67	71	67	51
FEC benchmark	25	25	25	40

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 40 cash days (previously 25 days).

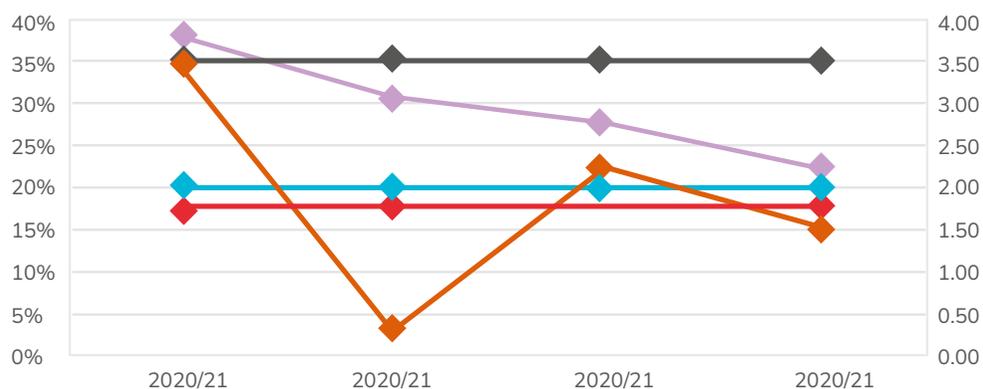
Closely managed cash balances, capital investment and costs, has helped to maintain the year-end cash balance and cash days to 51 at 31 July 2025, well above the FE Commissioner benchmark of 40. This does not include restricted cash of £2.1m which represents DfE grants received to improve the condition of the College’s estate.

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 well above the FEC target of 40.



## 7.6 BORROWING AS A PERCENTAGE OF INCOME

Borrowing and Debt Service Cover



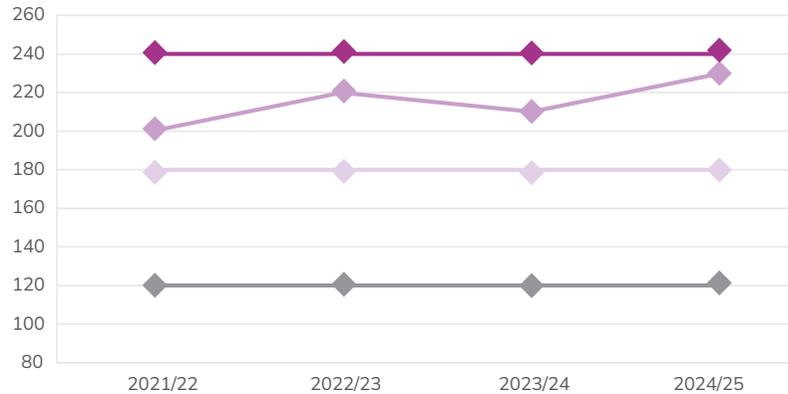
Borrowing as a percentage of income (also known as gearing or leverage) is used to measure the proportion of assets invested in a college that are financed by borrowing. It also provides an indicator to the longer-term financial stability of a college, because the higher the level of borrowing, the higher 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.

The College has long-term borrowing from Santander and a short-term loan from DfE, the latter will be fully repaid by 2026. No new finance leases have been utilised since 2024, and we continue to focus on reducing the level of debt. This has supported the College's strategy of improving the strength of our balance sheet and as a percentage of income, borrowing has dropped from 28% to 22% in 2025, now approaching the DfE threshold for Outstanding of 20%.

Debt service cover is a measure of the extent to which cash from operating activities will cover the cost of loan and lease repayments and the interest charged for these facilities. The FEC benchmark is 2 and the college has improved its ratio to just below this at 1.73. We expect this will exceed the FEC benchmark in 2026.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<span style="color: purple;">◆</span> Borrowing as a % of income	38%	31%	28%	22%
<span style="color: cyan;">◆</span> DfE Outstanding benchmark	20%	20%	20%	20%
<span style="color: black;">◆</span> DfE Good benchmark	35%	35%	35%	35%
<span style="color: orange;">◆</span> Debt service cover ratio	3.88	0.34	2.52	1.73
<span style="color: red;">◆</span> FEC benchmark	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

## 7.7 ESFA FINANCIAL HEALTH GRADE



	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Financial health score	200	220	210	230
Outstanding threshold	240	240	240	240
Good threshold	180	180	180	180
Requires improvement	120	120	120	120

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 of 230 at July 2025, with the College approaching the Outstanding threshold of 240.

The College expects to maintain its Good financial health score into 2026.

Further information on the College's performance can be found on the Dudley dashboard on the College's website: [dudleycol.ac.uk](http://dudleycol.ac.uk)