

The ABDO College of Education

Godmersham Park House, Godmersham Park, Godmersham, Canterbury CT4 7DT

Unique reference number (URN): 2848482

New provider monitoring inspection report:

14 and 15 January 2026

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors focused on the following themes:

- **progress in leadership and governance** – this means how much progress leaders and those responsible for governance have made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision, and is identifying and supporting the needs of apprentices
- **progress in inclusion** – this means how much progress leaders have made in identifying the needs of individual apprentices and putting suitable support in place, in particular for those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their experiences and opportunities, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics
- **progress in curriculum, teaching and training** – this means how much progress leaders and managers have made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices
- **progress in ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements** – this means how much progress leaders and managers have made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place

Leadership and governance

Reasonable progress: the provider's actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners and/or apprentices. Improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.

Leaders have been highly effective in working with a well-established group of employers and stakeholders. They have designed an apprenticeship programme which meets the needs of the dispensing optician sector very well. Leaders maintain an unwavering focus on the mission and vision of this specialist college, which is to provide high-quality education and training which advances the skills of those who work in the profession.

Leaders have worked diligently to make sure employers understand their responsibilities in supporting apprentices. Employers participate well in frequent, helpful progress reviews and support their apprentices in the workplace assiduously. If apprentices struggle to get off-the-job learning time, leaders intervene swiftly and mostly effectively.

Leaders have put in place appropriate processes to provide oversight of apprenticeship provision. The experienced board of trustees know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Leaders have recently strengthened the quality of information and data that trustees receive. Consequently, trustees now feel they can provide effective challenge and hold leaders to account, which they do. For example, they challenged leaders to work with the awarding body to try and reduce the assessment burden in year one, which they are now doing.

Inclusion

Reasonable progress: the provider's actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners and/or apprentices. Improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.

Leaders identify apprentices with potential barriers to learning carefully at the start of their programme. They collect information about learning difficulties, care experience and those without level 2 qualifications conscientiously. They use this information well to put in place effective learning support plans which they track and monitor during progress reviews. They consider and respond to the needs of apprentices who are carers thoughtfully. For example, leaders adapted the frequency of face-to-face teaching during residential weeks to make training more accessible.

Staff adapt support appropriately to meet apprentices' changing needs. For example, leaders put in place useful short-term support for apprentices struggling with mathematical concepts, which helped them master these skills. Leaders rightly recognise they have more work to do in formalising their tracking of additional learning support so they can measure the impact more easily and update support plans in a timely manner.

Curriculum, teaching and training

Reasonable progress: the provider's actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners and/or apprentices. Improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is very well sequenced and meets industry expectations highly effectively. Apprentices gain the knowledge and skills they need to become proficient in their job roles swiftly. They develop core skills such as accurate lens measurement and calibration required of dispensing opticians. They practise and apply them with increasing confidence in the workplace. Apprentices study in well-resourced classrooms and laboratories. Teachers are industry experts. They frequently adapt curriculum content to reflect industry developments and emerging technologies. This ensures that training remains current and relevant.

Teachers use their secure subject expertise to explain concepts and model practical techniques carefully. They use questioning effectively to test apprentices' understanding and help them recall knowledge. They provide apprentices with helpful feedback on their practical skills. However, feedback on written work is not consistently developmental so apprentices do not always understand how to improve.

Teaching staff benefit from helpful class profiles that identify learning support needs of the cohort. Leaders have recently put in place staff development to help teachers build the skills and confidence to use this information to support apprentices in their learning.

Safeguarding arrangements

Reasonable progress: the provider's actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners and/or apprentices. Improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.

Leaders use a suitable range of policies and procedures that make a positive contribution to keeping apprentices safe. They promote awareness of safeguarding and how to keep safe from risks of extremism and radicalisation widely throughout the college. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe because of the training they receive. They know how to report concerns or seek support in college and at work if they do not. They are rightly confident that staff will listen and act on concerns they raise.

Leaders capture and record safeguarding concerns carefully and confidentially. They take appropriate action to help keep apprentices safe, such as facilitating referrals to mental health first aiders. They monitor and track the impact of these actions appropriately.

Leaders follow safer recruitment processes to make sure that staff they recruit are safe to work with apprentices. They train staff and trustees in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, so they understand how to remain vigilant and keep apprentices safe.

About this inspection

Ofsted carries out monitoring inspections to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision where the provision offered is in scope for inspection.

The purpose of this monitoring inspection was not to determine grades for any of the evaluation areas set out in the further education and skills inspection toolkit. The purpose was to report on the provider's progress in relation to the 4 themes set out above.

The ABDO College of Education is an independent learning provider based in Godmersham, Kent. The College is a specialist provider, focused on training for the dispensing optician sector. At the time of the monitoring inspection, there are 247 apprentices in training. All apprentices are 19 years of age or older. They are all working towards the level 6 dispensing optician apprenticeship.

Lead inspector

Viki Faulkner

His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

Daisy Agathine-Louise

Ofsted Inspector

About this provider

Number of apprentices at time of inspection	247
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