

College of Animal Welfare

Not-for-profit organisation

Inspection dates

8–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- A very large proportion of learners on adult programmes achieve their qualifications.
- Learners work to a very high standard and develop excellent professional skills working with employers who are enthusiastic and supportive.
- An exceptionally large proportion of learners gain and/or sustain employment within the industry.
- Staff ensure very good coordination of veterinary nurse apprentices' learning at the college with the skills they are learning at work.
- Leaders, managers and staff at all levels make good use of data when they make decisions on what actions to take to improve the training.
- Teachers have a wide range of good-quality resources that they use very well when teaching.
- Leaders and managers make very good use of feedback from learners and employers to improve the training.
- Leaders design and promote a wide range of short and higher education courses for the veterinary industry which provide good opportunities for further learning.
- Learners receive very good advice and guidance about career opportunities in their industry.
- Veterinary nurses and learners on adult learning programmes have access to excellent online learning resources which help them to continue their learning outside of the classroom.
- Leaders and managers make excellent use of very strong links with employers and industry representatives to ensure that the training programmes meet business needs.
- Leaders and managers monitor the quality of provision well and have taken prompt and effective action to improve the achievement of veterinary nurses and learners on adult learning programmes.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Leaders' strategy for the development of learners' English and mathematical skills is ineffective.
- Managers do not ensure that self-assessment clearly identifies the strengths and areas for improvement for each programme and centre.
- Achievement for animal care apprentices is too low.
- Leaders, managers, teachers and assessors do not ensure that the targets they set for themselves or for learners are specific enough to allow them to measure progress easily.
- Too many veterinary nurse apprentices sit examinations or submit assignments several times before reaching the required standard.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The College of Animal Welfare is a not-for-profit company with centres in Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Yorkshire and Scotland. The College specialises in training for land-based industries, in particular for veterinary nursing and animal care.
- Since 2013/14 the college has also offered training and qualifications in accounting and business administration, health and social care, and leadership and management programmes under a separate brand, the College of Animal Welfare Business School. However, the majority of learners work in veterinary practices or with animals in other businesses or organisations.
- Apprentices attend one of the college's centres for off-the-job training, but much of the adult provision is offered through online courses. At the time of the inspection, eight learners were training with a subcontractor, the Open College of Equine Study.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Implement an effective strategy for the development of learners' English and mathematical skills and ensure that:
 - staff leading this work are suitably qualified to teach literacy and numeracy
 - teachers and assessors have the confidence and skills they need to support learners effectively
 - learners receive the help they need in a way that best suits their needs
 - teachers provide help to all learners who need it, regardless of their starting point or current level of skill.
- Improve target setting at all levels of the organisation to ensure that both management targets and those for individual learners are relevant, specific and easily measurable.
- Improve self-assessment, so that the summative report is concise and identifies strengths and areas for improvement clearly and for all aspects of the provision.
- Assess more accurately whether veterinary nurse apprentices are ready to sit external examinations or submit assignments, to improve their ability to pass at their first attempt.
- Take robust and rapid action to improve the achievements of animal care apprentices by implementing the plans for new management and quality assurance arrangements.
- Continue to improve achievement for veterinary nurse apprentices by ensuring that they:
 - are well prepared and working at the right standard for their examinations
 - receive the help they need to develop their literacy and numeracy skills to allow them to meet the academic demands of the course more easily.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

is good

- Leaders and managers have developed extensive links with employers and other representatives from the veterinary and animal care industries; they use these links very well to help them develop courses that are closely aligned to industry's and employers' needs. For example, leaders have designed a very wide range of low-cost short courses which provide excellent opportunities for veterinary nurses to develop their knowledge and understanding in a range of specialist topics. Leaders have designed a curriculum that includes bespoke courses specifically designed to meet requests from employers, and provide a wide range of levels from level 1 to degree level. Staff at all levels have high expectations of learners and are passionate about training learners to meet the high standards expected within the veterinary and animal care industries.
- College staff react enthusiastically to new areas of work; the initiative to provide qualifications in business administration and accounts has been particularly successful. Learners are achieving very well and employers are very satisfied with the new programmes being offered.
- Leaders and managers have maintained the majority of the strengths identified at the previous inspection and have acted quickly to reduce the impact of underperforming subcontractors. For example, leaders quickly terminated a contract with one subcontractor when the quality of provision fell below the expected standard. Staff have ensured that the small number of adult learners still completing their qualifications started under this subcontract are now achieving very well. As a result of this experience, leaders have developed robust procedures to ensure that all new provision and partnership arrangements are scrutinised carefully and effectively.
- Leaders have also effectively tackled weaknesses in the college's direct provision. After introducing a new qualification, diploma at level 2 for veterinary care assistants, leaders realised quickly that too few learners were completing the qualification. They took action quickly and robustly to identify and address the reasons why learners were not achieving the qualification. Their action led to a significant increase in achievement the following year. When the achievement of veterinary nurse apprentices declined, leaders and managers carried out extensive research to try to identify the reasons. Better initial advice and guidance, robust selection of employers and improved support for learners have led to improved achievement. In 2014/15 achievement for veterinary nurses was broadly in line with that in other similar providers.
- Leaders and managers have detailed knowledge of the progress learners are making on all programmes. They routinely analyse comprehensive data reports to highlight any deviation from expected standards as well as to monitor trends. Following review, leaders make detailed notes and assign actions to bring about improvements; managers ensure these are completed, and that actions taken have the desired effect.
- Senior leaders are developing the skills of teaching staff and assessors well. Managers' evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Managers challenge and support staff to improve, using professional development programmes, valued greatly by staff, which focus on relevant skills and themes. In addition, staff have access to a wide range of other development opportunities to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, learners make good progress and value the high levels of expertise that staff impart during their learning programmes. However, during observations of vocational lessons, managers do not evaluate sufficiently how well teachers develop learners' English and mathematical skills.
- Leaders and managers draw upon a wide range of information and data to inform their assessment of the quality of provision. They use self-assessment to bring about continuous improvement, and respond particularly well to feedback from employers and learners. However, the most recent annual self-assessment report is more descriptive than evaluative, and does not identify the strengths and areas for improvement specific to each individual programme or training centre.
- Managers and staff produce detailed and thorough action plans designed to bring about improvements in all aspects, such as quality assurance, strategic planning, management of staff performance, and outcomes for learners. However, too often staff do not identify the outcomes expected from the planned actions and do not set specific enough improvement targets. As a result, staff are not always able to evaluate the progress made or determine precisely the effect of their actions.
- Leaders and managers have a strong commitment to developing learners' English and mathematical skills. They have put in place new procedures to set out their expectations of staff providing support. However, leaders have recognised that literacy and numeracy support is not always effective; they are developing a

better strategy to ensure that all learners receive the support they need to achieve and meet the academic demands of their courses.

- A small minority of learners are on animal care apprenticeships; the achievement on these programmes has declined over the last three years. Following a review of apprenticeship provision, leaders have recently put in place a comprehensive improvement plan which includes new management and quality assurance arrangements for this area.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Senior leaders and managers have very clear strategic aims for the college; they take good consideration of the views of external partners and employers.
 - Senior leaders have detailed knowledge of the performance of the different learning programmes offered and focus strongly on improving learners' achievements while introducing new training opportunities. Their commitment to ensuring that all employees in the animal care and veterinary industries can work towards appropriate qualifications is based on a strong ethical foundation of supporting animal welfare.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Leaders and managers have given the safeguarding of learners a high priority and have developed particularly detailed plans and procedures to ensure that learners are safe, and know whom to contact if they have a concern.
 - The arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are comprehensive. Managers ensure that all staff are vetted thoroughly before they commence employment and all staff take part in regular safeguarding training.
 - Health and safety arrangements are effective. Staff carry out comprehensive risk assessments on all employers and monitor risk very effectively through regular audits.
 - The college's arrangements to protect learners from extremism and radicalisation are particularly well developed. All staff and the majority of learners have received training on how to identify signs of potential radicalisation. Leaders and managers have used expert advice to ensure emergency plans are in place to protect learners in the event of a major incident.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers and employers have high expectations of learners and set particularly high standards. They demand good-quality work and respectful behaviour. Learners respond very well and apply themselves effectively. Teachers are approachable and keen to support any learner who is falling behind with their work or having difficulty understanding a particular concept or task. Teachers plan their lessons very well and learners make good progress.
- Learners work very well together and help each other. They talk confidently during lessons about complex subjects and use technical language well. Teachers make very good use of learners' knowledge from work to illustrate subjects they are teaching, and learners value sharing their experiences in the workplace. This leads to lively lessons where learners can share good practice and learn from each other as well as from the teacher. For example, veterinary nurse apprentices learned different techniques for preparing sterile areas by listening to each other explain the techniques they used at work.
- The college works with employers who are committed to providing quality training and developing good practical skills. College staff work particularly closely with veterinary employers to ensure that the training provided at the college coordinates very well with the skills learners are acquiring in their workplace. This liaison results in a coherent training programme and learners are able to build on their skills effectively. Where appropriate, teachers and assessors provide parents and/or employers with clear and timely information that details the extent of learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, and their teaching motivates and inspires learners. They are well qualified in their vocational areas and all have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Teachers and assessors provide very helpful feedback to learners about their work and focus strongly on the standards that learners must reach.
- Staff have developed excellent resources that enable learners to learn online. The online resources are extensive and include materials that veterinary nurses can use before they start their programmes. Many adult learning programmes are provided online which means that learners can plan their learning to fit in with the other demands on their time. Employers greatly appreciate the online resources, which they use to support the training in the workplace.
- Teachers do not always provide enough help for learners to develop their English and mathematical skills effectively during lessons. For learners on adult learning programmes and for veterinary nurses, staff do not always provide help in a way that best meets the learners' needs. For example, staff directed a

learner needing help with spelling to online resources for people with dyslexia, even though it was not clear that dyslexia was causing the spelling difficulty.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Learners take pride in their work; they work to high professional standards in good-quality workplaces with enthusiastic employers. Senior leaders have high expectations of employers, and as a result the vast majority of learners benefit from very good environments in which to learn. Assessors take particular care to ensure that learners have a wide enough range of experiences and opportunities to learn. If necessary, assessors arrange for learners to work temporarily at other businesses or veterinary surgery branches, so that they can benefit from new experiences and activities that do not take place in their own workplace, such as orthopaedic surgery or working with reptiles.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance about careers in the industry. This includes attendance at a very good annual careers conference, as well as receiving good ongoing information about opportunities in the veterinary and animal care industries from staff. The college offers a wide range of highly relevant and informative short courses to allow learners to continue their training and develop their knowledge. Senior leaders develop courses specifically in response to employers' requests and the industries' needs, including courses which allow learners to progress to further and higher education.
- Learners know how to stay safe when working online or at work and are confident to approach staff with any concerns, or to report incidents and/or to obtain advice. Learners develop good working relationships with their teachers and trainers and are confident to disclose serious and personal information which is affecting their training. Staff take immediate and appropriate action, respond sensitively and provide excellent support.
- Learners' behaviour is exemplary in class and at work; they arrive at lessons ready to learn and take advantage of all the learning opportunities that staff, and their employers, provide. Their attendance and punctuality are very good.
- Too many veterinary nurses make several attempts at sitting and passing their examinations or submitting and resubmitting their assignments. Previously staff have not taken enough care to ensure that learners are ready to sit examinations or that their assignments are ready for submission. However, staff have recently introduced new end-of-subject tests which learners must pass before proceeding to mock and final exams. This new arrangement is already leading to more learners passing their examinations at their first attempt.
- Learners on courses at level 3, and adults on distance learning courses, do not get enough help to develop their English and mathematical skills. For learners following courses online, all the support is also online and is not appropriate for their needs, particularly for those who need to improve their mathematical skills. Staff do not involve learners who have dyslexia enough in deciding on the best way to support them, and so they are not always able to take advantage of the support offered. For example, readers for examinations meet the learners for the first time at the examination, and there is no preparation or rehearsal to determine exactly how the learners would like the reader to support them.
- When learners start veterinary nursing programmes they are required to have five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. However, when staff assess the level of these learners' skills, a minority are found to have a working level of skill equivalent to level 1. These learners are often not offered, or do not take up, any further diagnosis of their needs or support to help them. For a small minority of learners this lack of additional help hinders their ability to pass their examinations or complete their qualifications.

Outcomes for learners are good

- Since 2014/15, learners on adult learning programmes have achieved well, and current learners are making very good progress towards completing their qualifications. In previous years, achievement rates for adult learners who were training with a subcontractor, and mainly working towards qualifications in health and social care, were low. As a result of this poor achievement, senior leaders terminated the contract and the few learners still completing these courses now make excellent progress.
- In 2013/14 the college began to offer a new veterinary care assistant diploma at level 2. In the first year the proportion of learners staying and completing this diploma was too small. However, senior managers have worked hard to address the reasons for this poor achievement, and in 2014/15 the proportion of learners completing increased substantially, so that a very large proportion were successful. The much smaller number of learners currently studying this qualification are making good progress.

- Apprentices in the college's new areas of business administration or accounting make excellent progress and their achievement is very good.
- A particularly large proportion of learners progress to, or sustain, employment on completion of their courses. They develop skills which enable them to make good progress with their careers, gain promotion or progress to further and higher education. The standard of learners' work often exceeds that required for the qualifications and they develop high professional standards.
- Achievement rates for veterinary nurses declined between 2011/12, when they were exceptionally high, and 2013/14. However, in 2014/15 achievement improved and is now broadly in line with that in other similar providers. So far in 2015/16 a high proportion of learners are passing their veterinary nursing examinations and their progress is good.
- A small minority of apprentices are on animal care programmes and their achievement requires improvement. There are no other significant differences in the achievement of different groups of learners.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

are good

- The college has 257 learners on adult learning programmes. These learners are working towards a variety of different qualifications, including the diploma for veterinary care assistants at level 2, and qualifications in dog grooming and veterinary nursing at level 3. A small number of learners are working towards a variety of short courses in health and social care such as dementia care.
- Teachers and assessors have high expectations of learners and set demanding standards which match those of industry. Teachers plan a wide range of interesting activities which learners find thought-provoking, and as a result learners make good progress during lessons. Learners are enthusiastic and keen to develop their knowledge and skills. They very much enjoy their training.
- Teachers ensure that college-based learning and on-the-job training are very well coordinated so that learners can build on their learning effectively, and consequently learners quickly grow in confidence. Employers have a very good understanding of what is required for learners to achieve, and provide good-quality training. Teachers use their extensive industrial experience very well so that tasks reflect the everyday reality of animal welfare workplaces, thus bringing lessons to life and enhancing learning.
- Teachers provide comprehensive online learning resources which adult learners use regularly; these resources support the development of skills and allow adults to learn effectively in their own time. Online programmes are particularly helpful for adults who are unable to attend college. Teachers provide good support to enable learners to develop the theoretical knowledge, which complements well the skills training provided on the job by employers.
- Teachers assess learners' work accurately and promptly. Their feedback to learners, both spoken and written, is encouraging yet gives clear guidance as to how learners might improve the standard of their work. For example, in dog grooming lessons, the teacher writes down specific areas for improvement in learners' reflective learning logs each week. Teachers use questioning very effectively to check learning during lessons.
- Teachers provide good individual support to learners. Adults value the support which they receive from staff; this support helps those who have significant personal and social problems, which inhibit learning, to achieve well.
- Staff give good information and guidance before learners enrol on courses, which ensure that they build on their prior attainment and follow the correct course to match their career aspirations. While studying, learners receive much professional advice, which enables them to build realistic plans for their future.
- Teachers ensure that learners develop an appropriate understanding of the values of British society. Learners show mutual respect and tolerance to others' differing views during group discussions.
- The support higher-level learners, and those studying through online learning, receive for the development of English and mathematics requires improvement. Teachers do not use learners' starting points sufficiently to assess their individual needs and plan support. Teachers do not make enough checks on learners' understanding of mathematical concepts, nor do they routinely pay sufficient attention to the accurate use of the English language, to promote professional standards.
- A small minority of the teaching and learning strategies are inappropriate to the learning needs of adult learners, and reduce the status of their learning. For example, adults find it demeaning to use 'smiley faces' on the daily review sheets they complete to self-evaluate their progress.

- The college has 89 intermediate apprentices and 235 advanced apprentices. The majority of learners are veterinary nurse apprentices, with smaller numbers in animal care and business administration.
- Leaders and employers set high expectations, and apprentices, who are often new to their roles, develop an array of new skills that employers value highly. The large majority complete their apprenticeship and secure permanent employment. A minority go on to study at a higher level or are promoted to more senior roles. Former apprentices, once established in their role as veterinary nurses, often go on to support new apprentices at their veterinary practices. Apprentices in the college's new business school make excellent progress, and their achievement is very good. All nine apprentices who finished their programmes in 2014/15 achieved their full qualification.
- Employers contribute fully to their apprentices' programmes. They help assessors to set targets for apprentices and participate fully in reviews of their apprentices' progress. Veterinary nursing apprentices are supported well by workplace clinical coaches who are well trained for their role by the college's staff. Assessors closely monitor the contribution made by clinical coaches to the training of the veterinary nurse apprentices. Apprentices evaluate their own workplace skills effectively and discuss these with their clinical coaches and supervisors. Consequently, apprentices are able to make a full contribution to the work of their employers.
- Assessors are responsive to the individual needs of apprentices and provide good support that ensures that most apprentices make at least the progress expected of them. Assessors and supervisors respond to requests at short notice. For example, one apprentice was transferred at short notice to a branch of the surgery to attend an operating theatre and assist a veterinary surgeon to carry out an amputation. The assessor also attended at short notice to take advantage of the opportunity to assess the apprentice's skills in supporting surgery.
- Assessors now monitor the progress apprentices make closely, and this has greatly increased the pace of learning and achievement for current apprentices. Most apprentices are now completing their programmes within agreed timescales. Assessors review the progress of apprentices with their workplace supervisors, share information and discuss strategies to improve apprentices' progress. However, a small minority of apprentices in animal care are not being prepared well enough for assessment and are progressing too slowly.
- Apprentices receive good written feedback that tells them what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further. However, assessors do not use specific enough targets to help apprentices plan their individual learning and measure their progress. Feedback does not do enough to help apprentices improve the quality of their writing and mathematical skills.
- Apprentices are developing good customer care skills, particularly when working with clients who may be distressed or upset before or following a consultation. However, apprentices have insufficient opportunities to broaden their understanding of the diverse nature of people living and working in modern Britain beyond their current experiences. Although these themes are covered well during apprentices' inductions, they are not routinely discussed in learning sessions or during reviews of progress.

Provider details

Type of provider	Not-for-profit organisation
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	918
Principal/CEO	Barbara Cooper
Website address	www.caw.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	0	0	0	81	0	176	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	31	58	53	182	0	1		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	NA		NA		NA			
Number of learners aged 14–16	NA							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Open College of Equine Study 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Jo Parkman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shane Langthorne	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barrett-Mold	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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