Access Further Education

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2023/24

Executive Summary

access creative college

access sport

access industry

dBs institute

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Introduction

Executive Summary

The executive summary is the result of a three-stage process. Centre and Campus leaders produce local SARs for their education and training provision. National leaders assess these documents and create an overview of all provision types. Both highlight the salient features and link the underpinning evidence. A senior leadership panel moderates and summarises the findings. The process and report are shared to create local and national targets for the following year.

Chief Executive Officer

Thank you to all staff, students, and apprentices for another successful year. In our desire to achieve excellence, we reached another milestone by breaking the 90% achievement rate barrier. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to achieve it.

On another note, it was a great privilege to attend the opening of our London campus. The centre has now had its first full academic year. Also, I am always pleased to see our learners' achievements online and across social media.

I look forward to meeting new and continuing students and apprentices next year nationwide.

Key business developments and strategic intent

- In line with our strategic intention for education and skills, Access Creative College is now known as Access Further Education (AFE), part of the Access Education Group (AEG). The following sit under the aegis of AFE: Access Industry (AI), Access Sport (AS), and Access Creative (AC). Deep Blue Sound (dBS) is the group's Access Higher Education (AHE) arm. It enables a clear pathway for learners to progress from level 2 to undergraduate levels 4 to 6 within the group.

- AFE's education and skills strategy links to three key economic areas in the UK: creative, digital, and sport. All three encompass various occupations, including music performance, games, fitness training, cybersecurity, and creative venue technicians.

- The UK's sports industry contributes approximately £39 billion to the UK economy and supports around 0.5 million jobs. For example, between 2021 and 2024, around 183,000 people were working in sports and fitness occupations. The creative industries account for around 2.37 million jobs nationally, including 663,000 self-employed roles, around 7% of all UK jobs. The creative industries have experienced a larger-than-average expansion in employment, up 14.1% since 2019, pre-pandemic. The digital sector contributed approximately 5.6% of UK employment in 2022 and 2023.

- To meet the demands of the skills agenda, we have appointed a national skills and strategic lead. This appointment will help us advance the new government skills agenda and continue to link our provision to industry.

- 'Access Industry' has developed within AEG and is now the flagship of our apprenticeship programme. Within the next year, we will further develop two types of provision: sport and creative.

- We are working hard to prepare our curriculum reform for the future. This may include a curriculum to meet the changes to applied vocational qualifications should they happen in 2025.

- Regional centres such as Bristol, London, and Norwich play increasingly critical strategic skills roles. For example, in local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) and partnerships. Colleagues link with the Chamber of Commerce and the local skills improvement team in the West of England. We have initiated career events focusing on transferable skills and creative learning pathways. Our sport and creative offer sit in the heart of many local communities across England. We welcomed learners to our newly opened state-of-the-art London Campus in September 2023 for the first time.

AFE education and training provision

- AFE offers education and training in 8 main centres and many smaller sites in England.

- AFE had **5,019** learners (excluding apprentices) in 2023/24, including **1266** through a sub-contractual arrangement with Confetti. Access Sport had around **1,035** learners in 2023/24.

- Access Industry provision caters for **197** apprentices at Levels 2 and 3. These programmes are in arts-related occupational areas. In addition, there are 11 apprentices in sports.

- The overwhelming majority of learners aged 16-18 **(4890)** in 2023/24 followed an education programme for young people.

- AFE offered **67** places for learners with high needs. Confetti offered **61** places.

- A small proportion of adult learners **(71)** took vocational courses. In addition, a very small proportion of adult learners **(55)** followed Access to Higher Education programmes (A2HE).

- AFE completed its second Digital, Production and Design T Levels cohort in 2023/24 with **99 learners.**

- AFE has made progress in offering clear pathways for learners to progress from Level 2 to higher education provision. A key partner, dBS, offers direct progression to higher education courses.
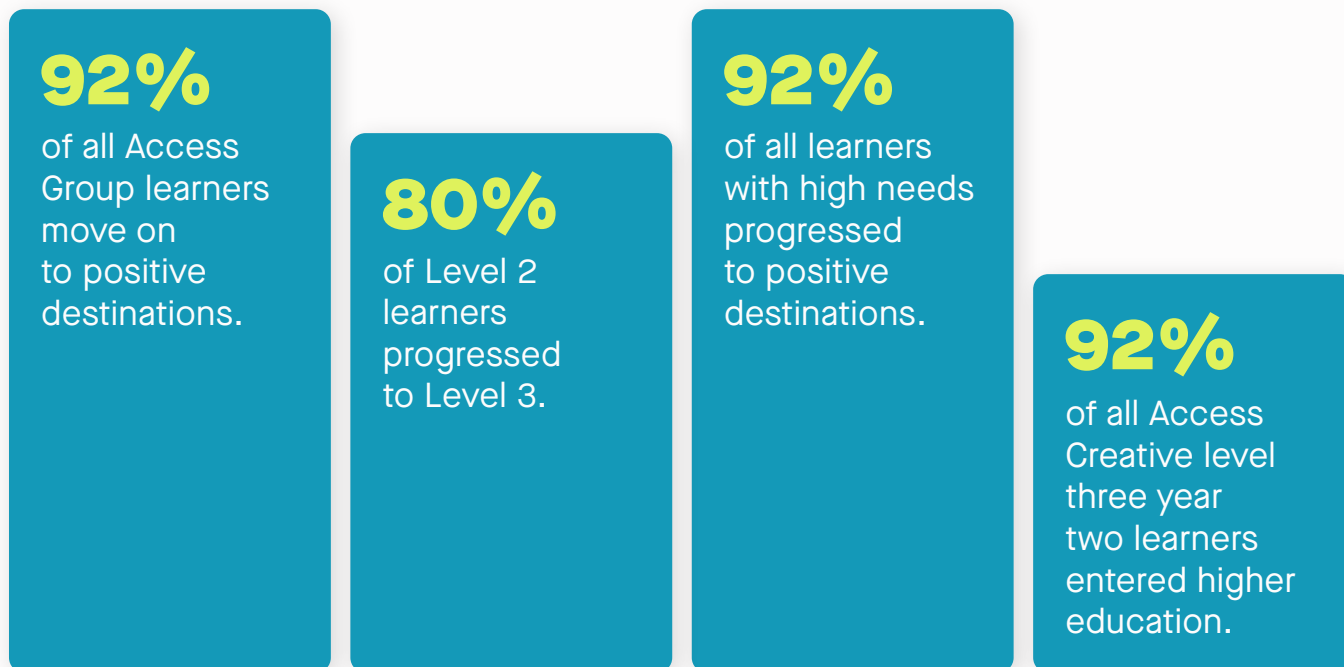

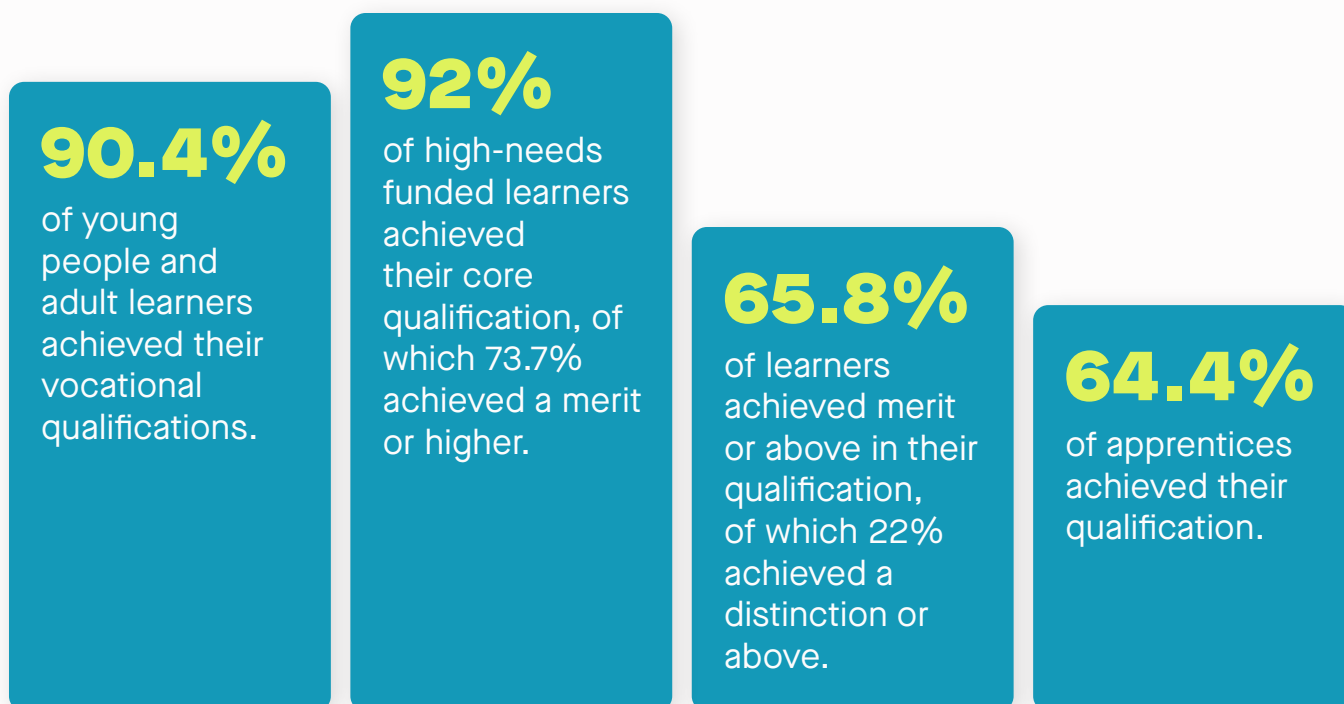# Notable curriculum achievements

- The organisation exceeded its aspirational target of **90%** in its qualification achievement rate for the first time.

- A full apprenticeship curriculum review was completed by May 2024, resulting in productive changes to the curriculum sequence and delivery methodology.

- In our learner surveys this year, **97%** rated their teaching as good or excellent. We received the highest ratings for student satisfaction ever.

- We completed our first full academic year with our new national quality team. This national quality cycle now includes a range of curriculum review methods, which gives AFE extensive oversight of the quality of education in each delivery centre across the country. The national system is a critical vehicle for becoming a truly evidence-led organisation.

- Newly developed 'transition visits' have been implemented to support high-needs funded (HNF) learners. These visits help learners transition to our provision and have proved successful with local authorities, learners, and parents.
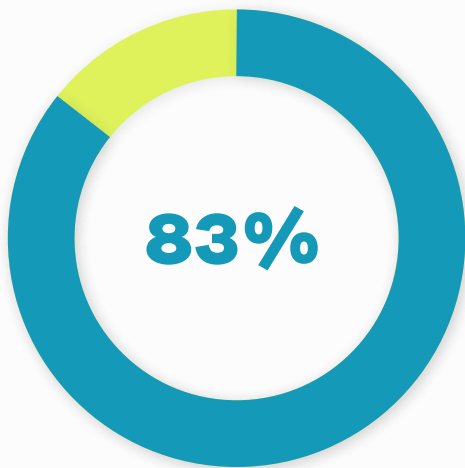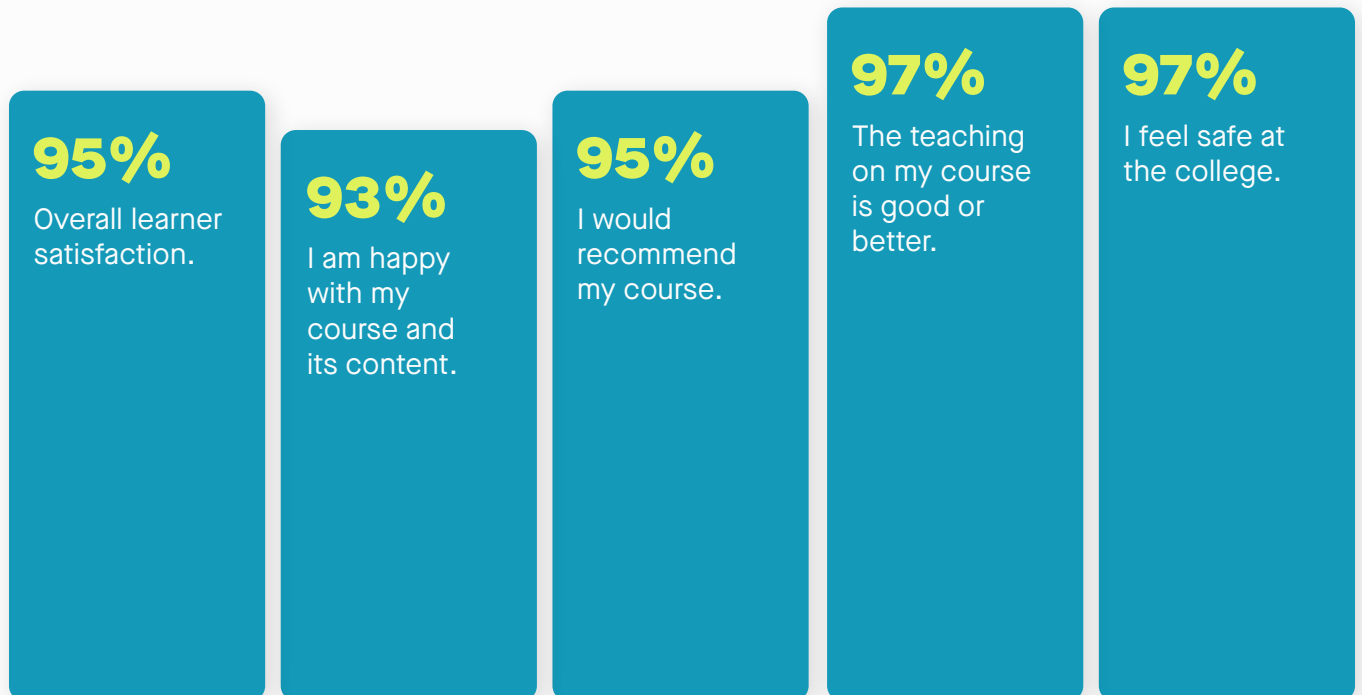
Headline Learner Outcomes

Learner destinations

92% of all Access Group learners move on to positive destinations.

80% of Level 2 learners progressed to Level 3.

92% of all learners with high needs progressed to positive destinations.

92% of all Access Creative level three year two learners entered higher education.

Learner achievement

90.4% of young people and adult learners achieved their vocational qualifications.

92% of high-needs funded learners achieved their core qualification, of which 73.7% achieved a merit or higher.

65.8% of learners achieved merit or above in their qualification, of which 22% achieved a distinction or above.

64.4% of apprentices achieved their qualification.

Attendance for 2023/24

83%

83% classroom and workshop attendance (excluding apprenticeships).

Learner surveys 2023/24

95%
Overall learner satisfaction.

93%
I am happy with my course and its content.

95%
I would recommend my course.

97%
The teaching on my course is good or better.

97%
I feel safe at the college.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths

- **The curriculum is ambitious and well-sequenced,** enabling learners to secure and demonstrate increased knowledge and skills over time.

- **Teachers are adept at creating and implementing strong practical learning experiences that help learners gain industry-level knowledge and skills.** Almost all learners in education programmes for young people rate their teaching as good or better. Learners on apprenticeship programmes also rate their training workshops highly.

  A high proportion of learners are successful in their next steps. Around **92%** progress to positive destinations such as university, further education, or paid employment. Around **95%** of learners rate the relevance of their skill development to their next steps to be good or excellent.

- **A high proportion of apprentices pass their end-point assessment at the end of their programme and achieve a high grade.** Almost all apprentices who complete the full duration of their programme go on to achieve their end-point assessments. Around **76%** of apprentices achieved the higher distinction grade, and **97%** passed their end-point assessments.

- **Teachers set high expectations that lead to good behaviour outcomes in the classroom.** This year, we found good behaviour frequently through our recorded classroom visits **(252)** and centre reviews **(7).**

- **Staff help support and create a safe, calm, and inclusive environment.** Almost all **(97.5%)** of AFE students felt safe in college. Rooms are appropriately equipped and set up to create a safe space for students to learn.

- **High-needs learners thrive within the Access curriculum. The college has greatly improved the support they receive to help them transition into their courses.** They achieve extremely well in their studies.

- **Learners benefit from a range of substantive employment-related activities.** For example, they have participated technically in live productions at national music and cultural festivals. Centre leaders have supported learners in collaborating with various creative and sports industry employers in their communities.

- **Equality and diversity (E&D) solidly underpin education and skills experiences in all sessions.** Equality is prominent and promoted to all staff and learners in the college's Creative Values. Learners value the rich ethnically and culturally diverse makeup of the student body. Around **97.5%** state that AFE actively promotes E&D in their sessions, representing an increase from the 2022/23 survey.

- **Leaders engage teachers and industry trainers through a nationally targeted continuing professional development programme.** It promotes and improves teaching, learning, and assessment through workshops known as curriculum summits. They share and collaborate on ideas and practice.

- **Robust management and frequent performance monitoring have enabled a continued upward trajectory of achievement rates.** Leaders' actions have helped narrow and maintain a smaller achievement gap between centres.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is **effective**. AFE has a clear and well-led structure for all aspects of safeguarding.

Governance

- The college's governance is well established. Frequent bi-monthly further education (FE) board meetings support and challenge the provision's performance. They engage key stakeholders from all areas of the provision. Before each meeting, an external advisor scrutinises and reports to the CEO on the board papers. This ensures that leaders are suitably challenged. The organisation is close to its aspirational goal of an evidence-led curriculum.

Key areas for improvement

- **Learners and apprentices do not sufficiently improve their numeracy and literacy skills through their vocational programmes.** Despite **96%** of learners surveyed understanding the importance of Maths and English, both subjects remain insufficiently connected to the main curriculum in learners' minds.

- **The organisation's overall attendance requires improvement.** This rate **(83.0%)** includes Go live, English, and mathematics and a decline in vocational attendance at the end of the academic year.

- **The personal development curriculum is insufficiently engaging and purposeful for enough of our learners across the provision types.**

- **We do not use information sufficiently to evaluate the distance learners progress from their starting points.** We have the information to support analysis, but we need to use it better to define success across our range of learners.

Quality of education and training across AFE at a glance

Types of Provision	EPYP	High Needs	Apprentices	Adult
	2	1	2	2

Quality of Education	Behaviours & Attitudes	Personal Development	Leadership & Management
2	2	2	2
Governance	Meeting Skills Needs	Safeguarding	Overall Effectiveness
Highly Effective	Reasonable	Effective	2

Moving forward to 2024/25

AFE within the group is not yet outstanding because:

- The achievement of qualifications needs to be sustained at **90%** plus over three years.

- Attendance, although improving, is not high enough.

- English and mathematics delivery and achievement require further improvement.

Key priorities nationally to improve further in 2024/25

Improve attendance further across all centres, particularly those with lower attendance.

- Ensure the curriculum and teaching are as engaging as possible, particularly in the third term.

- Set higher expectations with staff and learners at the start.

- Respond quickly to where learners' attendance slips.

- Ensure all lessons are effectively timetabled.

- Increase parental engagement.

Improve learners' English and mathematics skills within their vocational programmes.

- Create a professional development programme for vocational teachers.

- Enrol all level 2 learners on Century for skills development.

- Check the effectiveness of the programme.

Further improve the curriculum in all education and skills provision to be more purposeful and engaging for learners' personal development.

- Localise the offer and ownership of the programmes to centres.

- Review the personal development provision.

- Increase preparation and delivery time for specialist teachers.

- Develop personal development provision that is bespoke for apprenticeships.

Better use information to evaluate the distance travelled by learners from their starting points.

- Develop the management reporting of learner in-year and final grade profiles from learner qualifications at the start.

- Improve the monitoring of learners' progress on Access to Higher Education programmes for adults.

Key priorities at all centres to improve further in 2024/25.

- Centre leaders should take action on key priorities following their local recommendations.

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