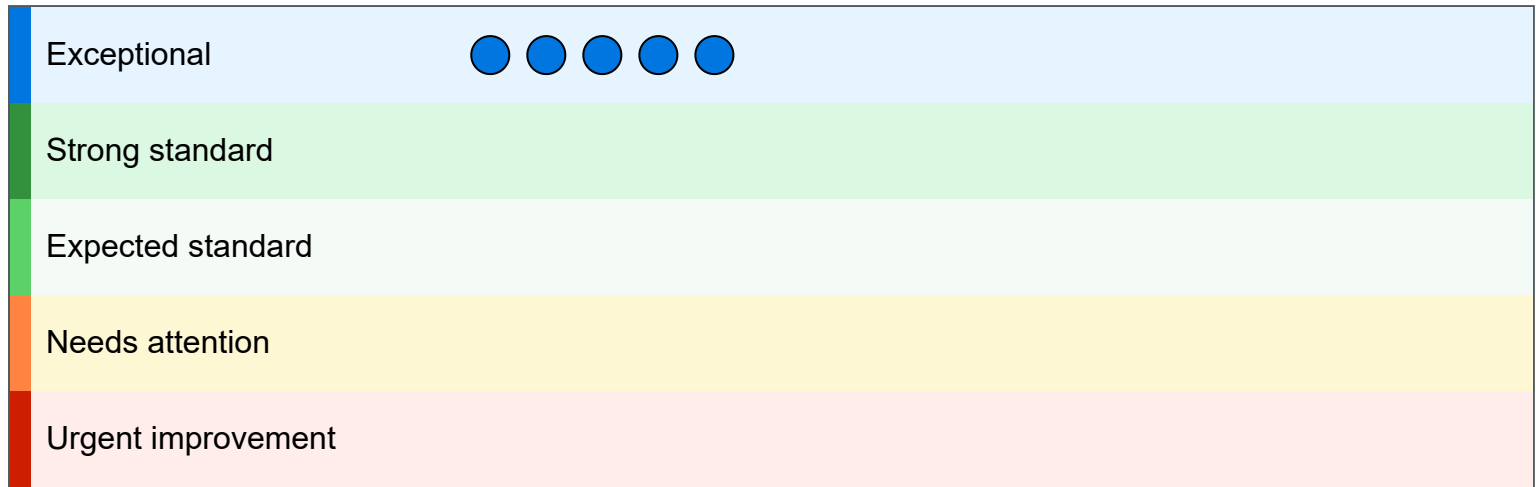


CAPA College

Address: Mulberry Way, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 2QN

Unique reference number (URN): 145869

Inspection report: 21 April 2026



✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

1. Inclusion, and leadership and governance



Inclusion**Exceptional** ●

Leaders have developed a culture at the college which embraces inclusivity. Leaders' inclusion strategy threads through everything that the college represents and is at the heart of the college's ethos. Their core values of 'accessibility, collaboration and excellence' underpin the college's strategy. Leaders, trustees, governors and staff have very successfully achieved the college's mission that all students, regardless of background, have access to the highest quality arts education and training. Consequently, students achieve exceptionally well in every aspect of their learning.

Leaders work closely with external stakeholders, recognising that highly effective inclusion is a shared responsibility. They work exceptionally well with parents to ensure that students can meet their full potential. They work very effectively with external agencies, particularly from students' previous schools, to ensure that they have comprehensive information on students before they start at the college. Where applicable, they work closely with agencies, such as virtual schools, to support students, including those who are leaving care.

Leaders and staff very quickly and accurately identify specific barriers to learning that students face. They put in very well-considered support plans so that all students overcome these barriers. Leaders have in place high-quality bespoke special educational needs and/or disabilities provision and access arrangements for students with more complex needs, with exceptional levels of pastoral and learning support provided by highly skilled and dedicated staff. Learning support arrangements include several strands which provide students with highly effective tailored support.

Students feel incredibly well supported by all staff. They feel recognised and valued, with staff committed to helping them achieve their full potential.

Leadership and governance**Exceptional** ●

Leaders, trustees and governors provide excellent leadership that has a life-changing and transformational impact on students' learning and their futures. They have maintained a very clear focus on delivering arts education and training to an extremely high standard since opening the college. Leaders have significantly expanded the provision, with additional curriculum pathways, successfully increasing the number of students in recent years, without compromising the impressively high-quality education and support provided by staff.

Leaders, trustees and governors have an exceptionally thorough understanding of the strengths of the college and constantly strive to make an even wider impact across the region. They have developed an extensive outreach programme, providing access to arts training opportunities for younger learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Leaders make a significant contribution to regional and national initiatives by working with external organisations. They have worked very effectively with the local council to involve students in local creative events, such as 'The Hatchling'; a large-scale outdoor theatrical

event in Wakefield. Stakeholders, including the National Theatre, regard highly the work of the college.

Governors and trustees are highly skilled, providing leaders and managers with focused support and challenge to develop and enhance continually what the college does. They show considerable determination so that provision remains at the highest quality and has a positive impact on the young people.

Leaders carefully ensure that workload for both teachers and support staff is manageable. Alongside staff, leaders have developed a very useful wellbeing charter prioritising staff wellbeing.

Teachers benefit from a highly effective and tailored continuous professional development programme. Leaders have developed an innovative training programme to support industry professionals to teach at the college.

2. Education programmes for young people

Exceptional



Exceptional ●

Achievement

Exceptional ●

Students achieve exceptionally well, both academically and personally. Achievement rates are consistently high, with a very high proportion of students achieving distinction grades. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other barriers to learning are as successful as their peers.

Students apply themselves with determination and commitment, which contributes very positively to the extensive and sustained progress from their starting points. Students quickly develop the skills, knowledge and attributes that they need to become highly confident, creative professionals in the arts and performing arts sector.

The quality of students' work is of an impressively high standard, exceeding the level required. They develop high levels of performance and technical skills relevant to their specialist pathways, including creating very professional individual and group performances. Students produce thought-provoking short films using industry standard software.

For many students, attending the college has a life-changing impact on their future career prospects and employment in the creative and performing arts. Many students progress into

prestigious higher education institutions and performing professional training academies and to very successful careers in the creative and performing arts industry.

Curriculum and teaching

Exceptional ●

Leaders collaborate with their extensive network of education and arts professionals, employers and alumni, to provide a high-quality curriculum informed by current industry practice. They frequently review and refine the curriculum to reflect the rapid changes in the performing arts sector, such as the introduction of aerial and Latin performance to meet the growing demand for performing arts and production on cruise ships. Teachers are extremely skilled at adapting the curriculum, at times at short notice, to incorporate industry-based learning opportunities as they arise to deepen students' knowledge and develop their skills further.

With precision and accuracy, teachers assess students at the start of their courses through a highly effective programme of initial auditions, interviews and induction. They identify and provide highly personalised support for students so that they can harness their creativity and thrive. Students develop an exceptionally broad set of skills, recognising the likelihood that their career in the arts may be varied.

Students benefit from incredibly high-quality teaching. Teachers have high levels of expertise in their professional fields, further enhanced by visiting specialist professional experts frequently teaching at the college. Teachers encourage students to move out of their comfort zone and take risks within a safe and supportive environment. Teachers employ frequent repetition, practise and feedback to enable students to master techniques and become fluent and confident. Drama students learn about and practise combat training techniques with staff with expertise in physicality in drama.

Teachers skilfully use highly effective assessments that are undertaken simultaneously across different curriculum pathways and year groups. This maximises opportunities for students to learn from their peers and apply the skills they have learned in collaborative projects. Students create full productions where they deepen their understanding of the industry. They are highly successful in national competitions and represent the college with the upmost pride.

Participation and development

Exceptional ●

Students rapidly develop mature and professional behaviours, thriving in the culture of very high expectations. Students describe their time at the college as life-changing, and their personal growth is exceptional. They recognise how much they have changed by becoming much more resilient and confident, and able to cope with the demands of the creative and performing arts industry. Students are highly committed and fully immersed in their studies, despite the challenging personal circumstances that many students experience. Their attendance is consistently high.

Students experience a rich variety of exceptionally high-quality work-related opportunities to hone their skills and understanding of the creative and performing arts industry. For example, they perform in a showcase of dance and song at a leading London theatre. In

addition, students have utilised professional recording studios at the 'Production Park' in Wakefield to produce the songs that they have written to a highly professional standard.

Students benefit from an exceptional tutorial programme. They can talk confidently about the social, emotional, financial and physical topics that could affect their lives. Students are very well prepared for their professional lives and know how to protect themselves. They develop considerable social capital while at the college, including having the skills to advocate for themselves and collaborate highly effectively with their peers. Students are highly respectful of their peers, teachers and visitors to the college. They contribute to making the college a highly welcoming and inclusive environment.

Students are exceptionally well informed about how they can progress their careers in the creative and performing arts industry. They are ambitious, while realistic, about what they can achieve. Teachers, alongside a range of visiting speakers, provide high-quality careers guidance. Students amend their career plans based on the information they have received.

What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider

Students feel exceptionally privileged to study at the college. They have worked hard to audition for a place at the college, and they take every opportunity the college provides to maximise their chances of success in the highly competitive creative and performing arts industries. They talk eloquently of the progress that they make and how the college has a transformative impact on their lives. Students recognise that they have access to life-changing opportunities provided by the dedicated leaders and staff, and they seize these opportunities wholeheartedly.

Students are incredibly committed to everything they do at the college. They exude determination, dedication and pride in the development of their knowledge and skills. Many students travel long distances to get to the college and are enthusiastic and highly motivated.

Students are highly ambitious and inspired about what they can achieve while at the college and in the future. They take confidence in the success of previous students, which include performers at the prestigious theatre companies and directors of national dance companies.

Students enjoy every aspect of college life. They confidently talk about any barriers to learning that they face and how staff support and challenge them to be their best selves. They are exceptionally polite and mature beyond their years.

Students are highly respectful of each other and their teachers. They celebrate their uniqueness and individuality, and face challenges confidently. They learn how to incorporate their differences, such as physical disabilities, into productions to ensure that everyone has a place.

About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with students, teachers, support staff, governors and stakeholders during the inspection.

CAPA College is a 16 to 19 free school which is part of Enhance Academy Trust. The college specialises in providing courses in creative and performing arts. It opened in September 2018 in temporary accommodation before moving to a purpose-built campus in the centre of Wakefield in 2022.

Students study level 3 programmes which include a main vocational qualification (extended diploma in performing and production arts), with the option also to study an A level or extended project qualification. There are 5 curriculum pathways: production, drama, dance, musical theatre and film and television. There are currently 497 students across both year groups. There are a small number of students retaking their GCSE English and mathematics qualifications.

Principal: Claire Nicholson

Lead inspector:

Mark Keen, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Anne Tyrrell, Ofsted Inspector

Glenise Burrell, His Majesty's Inspector

Linnia Khemdoudi, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 21 April 2026

Number of learners

Total learners

497

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

Strong standard

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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