

Inspection of National College for the Creative and Cultural Industries

Inspection dates:

8–11 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The National College for the Creative and Cultural Industries was established in September 2016. The college was started by employers from prestigious national creative organisations to close the identified skills gaps for technical and backstage training in the creative industries. The college is situated in Purfleet. College leaders work with the creative and cultural skills sector council and key employers from the creative sector to develop industry-relevant qualifications at levels 3 and 4.

Leaders offer education programmes for 18 young people and six adults at levels 3 and 4. The 81 apprenticeships predominantly study the level 3 creative venue technician standard. Leaders enrol apprentices from across the country. Around half work for a range of world-recognised organisations in and around London.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices benefit greatly from the wealth of employer expertise available to them. Frequent opportunities to shadow industry specialists from other theatres and theatrical departments enable them to increase their knowledge of how different areas of the creative industries work.

Apprentices gain secure knowledge of their subject through constant practice and recall. This reinforcement enables apprentices to perform often technically demanding tasks quickly and accurately. They use complex and high-level technical language well.

Learners participate in good-quality, industry-relevant work experience. This develops their wider understanding of how the creative industries operate and prepares them effectively for working in the industry. However, not enough learners benefit from working with the industry clients who use the onsite rehearsal facilities. Consequently, too few learners experience the staging of large-scale commercial performances first hand.

Apprentices and learners benefit from a variety of networking events and additional visits within the creative industries sector, for example industry-relevant exhibitions, visits to a range of theatres and sector-specific promotional events, throughout their programme. As a result, they develop good communication skills and contacts with other industry professionals.

Learners enjoy the friendly and welcoming environment at the college. They appreciate the support from staff to help them learn and to find work in the creative industries. Learners and apprentices behave with great maturity. They bring fresh ideas and new ways of thinking to the workplace. Learners feel listened to and they feel safe.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices and learners significantly improve their technical skills. Apprentices often work in more than one theatre, so they can experience different sound, lighting and special effect systems, for example being able to master both automated and counterweight flying techniques. As a result, learners gain a wide range of specialist skills and develop good working relationships with colleagues from other organisations.

Teachers ensure that through organising a range of events, full-time learners gain a good understanding of a variety of job roles, such as director, stage manager, lighting technician or marketing manager. Learners develop good skills and knowledge to run successful small public events before working on larger, more complex events, such as West End shows.

The standard of learners' and apprentices' work is high. Managers and employees

greatly value their apprentices. Apprentices and learners are keen to learn and have a desire to produce work to their very best ability. Learners collaborate well with their peers to produce high-quality and detailed projects. Learners often take on additional responsibilities and roles, so they learn a wider range of industry-specific skills.

Leaders ensure that apprentices and learners develop a secure knowledge of health and safety in their workplaces. Many apprentices and learners achieve additional qualifications relevant to the theatre, such as 'rescue at height'. Learners and apprentices fully understand the importance of adhering to stringent health and safety standards. They know how to work safely to keep themselves and their colleagues safe.

Teachers ensure that full-time learners are knowledgeable about the range of careers available to them within the creative industries. Learners frequently refer to different job roles and what skills they need to develop to gain employment. Teachers use their own industry contacts well to further develop learners' knowledge. They embed careers advice effectively into 'live' project briefs. However, the careers advice that coaches provide to apprentices does not give them a clear idea of the potential career paths available to them on completing their apprenticeship.

Learning coaches do not ensure that apprentices maintain and further develop their information, communication and technology (ICT), and English and mathematics skills to a good standard. Learning coaches do not assess all apprentices' starting points in a timely manner to identify what skills they need to improve. For example, whether apprentices can use spreadsheets to manage the budgets for the events and exhibitions they will plan and manage.

Leaders have not ensured that all learning coaches have the skills and knowledge to coach apprentices to develop the skills they need. A significant minority of learning coaches do not provide good-quality learning. These learning coaches do not ensure that apprentices know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Learning coaches do not ensure that employers know how to help apprentices link their theoretical learning to their workplace learning activities.

Leaders have not ensured that learning coaches are trained to support apprentices who have additional support needs in the workplace. Learning coaches do not work with employers to help them identify what reasonable adjustments they need to make for learners with mental health conditions or those on the autistic spectrum. Consequently, they do not help apprentices to develop the strategies they need to cope with the pressures of the industry in which they work.

Leaders work closely with employers and the creative and cultural skills sector council. They have developed a curriculum at levels 3 and 4 that meets the skills and recruitment needs of the sector well. However, leaders have been too slow in ensuring that learners and apprentices can move on to relevant higher-level study to further develop their careers. For example, learners studying the level 4 professional

diploma have no direct progression route on to an appropriate level 5 course.

Governors have relevant creative industries experience and a detailed knowledge of the further education sector. They support and challenge the senior leadership team effectively to improve the employer and learner experience. However, they do not always ensure that the actions undertaken improve the quality of apprenticeship provision quickly enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders undertake appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with learners. Leaders ensure that staff are trained appropriately and that employers understand their responsibilities on how to keep apprentices safe. The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) supports learners' wider well-being needs very well.

The DSO frequently reports to senior managers and governors to ensure that they are fully informed of the issues that arise. The DSO ensures that learners and apprentices receive up-to-date and relevant training. They have a good understanding of how to protect themselves, for example, from the potential risks of up-skirting and gang-based violence. Learners and apprentices feel safe and know who to report issues to.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that apprentices and their employers understand apprenticeships fully so that they can work effectively together to help apprentices develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours.
- Leaders need to ensure that learning coaches understand the apprenticeship standards fully. They need to ensure that apprentices develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.
- Leaders need to ensure that learners and apprentices have clear and industry-relevant progression routes from their current levels of study to help them access a wider range of potential career pathways.
- Leaders need to ensure that all learning coaches thoroughly assess apprentices' skills on entry, so they know what ICT, English and mathematics skills apprentices need to develop throughout their programme to succeed in their future career.
- Leaders need to ensure that learning coaches and employers are better informed of how to support apprentices with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities or mental health conditions to make sure that they develop strategies to cope when under pressure.

Provider details

Unique reference number	144793
Address	The Backstage Centre High House Production Park Vellacott Close Purfleet RM19 1RJ
Contact number	0203 6756750
Website	www.creativeindustries.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Sue Dare
Provider type	Further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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