

Inspection of Capital City College Group

Inspection dates:

21–24 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Education programmes for young people	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Capital City College Group (CCCG) was formed in 2016, following the merger of City and Islington College and Westminster Kingsway College. In November 2017, the College of Enfield, Haringey and North East London also joined the group. The group is one of the largest providers of further education in the country. The provision is split across 11 main campuses stretching from Victoria in central London to Enfield in north east London.

At the time of the inspection, there were nearly 25,000 learners enrolled at the college. Of these, 12,800 learners were on adult learning programmes, 9,250 were on education programmes for young people and 1,900 were on apprenticeships. Two thirds of apprentices were on standards and a third on frameworks. Nearly 500 learners were in receipt of high-needs funding. Around 8,300 learners were on courses at level 3, of which around 6,000 were aged 16 to 18. Two thirds of this cohort were on vocational programmes, and the remaining third on A levels. Approximately 6,500 learners were studying at entry level, 3,300 at level 1 and 5,600 at level 2. Around 270 learners aged 14 to 16 also spend a proportion of their time learning at the college. The college provides courses across an extensive range of subjects. The largest subject area within the college is English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

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

Learners value their time at college, where staff encourage learners to widen their expectations and aspirations. For example, a group of ESOL learners described the positive atmosphere they feel around the college. They explained how their course is useful to them. They improve their understanding of British culture and values. They also improve their ability to communicate, which helps them integrate better into society and increases their employment prospects.

A small minority of learners, particularly on A-level courses, are less satisfied with their experience at the college. These learners have been frustrated, for example, by frequent changes to the timetable or to staffing, particularly during the first few weeks of their courses. Occasionally lessons are cancelled at very short notice, with little or no explanation. These changes have a negative impact on learners' progress over time.

Learners gain an outward-looking attitude towards other people. They are taught about and know the importance of equality of opportunity. They study in an inclusive environment among peers who come from a diverse range of backgrounds. Learners who lack confidence in their abilities receive skilful support from teachers. For example, staff integrate learners with additional learning needs well into vocational and academic programmes, where appropriate.

Teachers know and care about their learners. Learners receive the support and guidance they need to help deal with potential barriers to learning. For example, staff help learners who suffer from anxiety to manage their emotions. As a result, learners feel more secure and gain the self-confidence they need to make progress.

Most apprentices at the college have suitable access to high-quality, industry-standard equipment and facilities. Tutors and assessors are highly qualified and skilled at supporting apprentices. This helps ensure apprentices are able to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to take back to the work they do with their employers.

The experience of learners, and the quality of the education they receive, are not consistently good enough across the college's campuses. In particular, too many learners at the campuses in Islington and King's Cross are on courses that are not sufficiently demanding. By contrast, other students are on programmes that push them to excel. For example, science teachers help ensure the curriculum is relevant to a broad range of vocational pathways including applied science and the healthcare sectors. Teachers in these subjects motivate learners through engaging and vocationally relevant learning activities. As a result, learners achieve and many progress successfully to science-related courses at university.

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

Staff and governors have worked hard to manage the merger of the three colleges to form the new CCCG. They have established a successful vision for the college group, while understanding and maintaining the distinctive features of each college in its locality. The merger of the three colleges initially brought about a degree of instability in the leadership team. The more notable impact was at the Islington campus, and in the management of apprenticeships. Governors and leaders have now established the structure for the group, but in places this is still in its early days. Staff still feel the legacy of leadership changes, although plans to secure long-term consistency in the quality of provision across the campuses are now in place.

Leaders and managers know their college. They are aware of the relative strengths and areas that require improvement. They recognise the need to improve the quality of education, particularly in apprenticeships and education programmes for young people. They also recognise the need to increase the proportion of apprentices and young learners who successfully achieve their qualifications.

Leaders and governors have established an effective governance structure. This supports both the work of the college group, and the constituent colleges. Governors show strong commitment to the college mission. They support leaders to challenge underperformance. They also help to ensure the college serves the diverse needs of the college communities, and that learners stay safe.

Leaders, managers and governors work closely with local partners, such as NHS trusts and Jobcentre Plus. This helps ensure education and training provision meets local employment needs. For example, managers have responded to requests from the rail industry to recruit and train learners in rail maintenance to address a skills gap in the sector.

Teaching in a significant minority of A-level and a few vocational courses is weak. Teachers do not set sufficiently high expectations of learners. At times, attendance is too low, and teachers do not challenge learners when they arrive late. On occasions, assessment is not precise or helpful to learners. Teachers do not identify the gaps in learners' understanding. They do not explain or reinforce knowledge so learners can remember and apply it. Many learners do not build on what they knew and could do at the start of their course. Too few learners on A-level courses acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their examinations, or to gain the grades that they should expect. Teaching at the Kings Cross campus was notably weaker than at other campuses.

Too many apprentices do not complete or achieve their qualifications. This has been exacerbated over recent months by changes to management, staffing and assessors. Not all apprentices receive regular or timely progress reviews. College staff do not communicate well enough with employers. A significant number of employers indicate their frustration as they are unclear, for example, about the progress and attendance of their apprentices. College managers have been slow to

respond to employers' requests to rectify these issues. As a result, the employers do not have the information they require to support apprentices if they fall behind.

Too few learners aged 16 to 18 who take examinations in English and mathematics successfully achieve their qualifications. Attendance at GCSE and functional skills English and mathematics lessons is particularly low. Teachers struggle to motivate learners to attend assessments. As a result, teachers are not able to identify any gaps in learning, and therefore cannot support the learners to improve.

By contrast, adult learners who study ESOL make good progress and acquire valuable new knowledge and skills. Many achieve their qualifications. For example, learners across all levels improve their skills over time in the correct use of grammar, and sentence construction using capital letters and full stops. Consequently, the large majority of adult learners are well prepared for the next level of study.

Most learners behave well. They are respectful of teachers and fellow students, both in lessons and around the college campuses. This results in a generally calm and focused atmosphere in lessons. The large majority of learners demonstrate positive attitudes towards their studies. Many are highly motivated and speak positively about their experience as a learner or apprentice at the college. For example, apprentices in pharmaceuticals are highly motivated to achieve well. They enjoy their programme, attend regularly and value the opportunity to acquire new knowledge from their tutors and peers.

Learners feel safe at the college. Most learners have a sound knowledge of the local risks such as knife crime and county lines. They have good access to information on how to keep safe, both from literature around the college and from staff. Learners and apprentices also know how to stay safe online. They know of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

Managers design and deliver a relevant curriculum that meets the needs of learners. It provides a suitably broad spread of subjects and levels. They have also created a timetable in such a way as to improve access, and therefore widen participation for learners. For example, managers schedule part-time adult courses at a range of times during the day and evening. This enables learners with personal and work commitments to attend courses at times that suit them.

Most teachers and assessors have appropriate qualifications and relevant industry experience. For example, catering teachers have extensive experience of working in the catering and restaurant trades. They use this skilfully to help create realistic working environments for learners. As a result, learners acquire the practical and interpersonal skills they need to deal with the daily pressures associated with working in the sector.

Careers advice and guidance across most of the provision are good. Staff make learners aware of the progression routes and career choices available to them, and the qualifications they need to go to the next stage of study or employment. Staff give learners the right help and guidance to apply to university. A high proportion of

learners go on to university from level 3 and access to higher education courses. A small proportion of apprentices are unclear about their career options should they choose not to remain with their employer on completion of the apprenticeship.

Learners benefit from a good range of curriculum enrichment activities that help prepare them for the next steps of their careers. For example, learners on catering courses attend a range of external visits and talks from industry professionals. This helps them broaden their knowledge of humane and sustainable farming, and how food goes from the field to the table.

Learners who need extra help in lessons, and specifically those with high needs, receive effective support from tutors and support staff. Leaders and managers use funding for learners with high needs particularly well. For example, at the Alexandra Centre, teachers and additional support staff skilfully support learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These learners benefit from highly personalised programmes. They also have good access to high-quality specialist technology and learning aids. This helps them develop their skills and independence and prepares them well for their next steps in learning and life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers and governors have put in place suitable procedures and policies to help safeguard learners' welfare. Leaders and managers take appropriate steps to mitigate local risks and threats from the community, in particular knife crime, county lines and local gang culture. Leaders and managers have put sound arrangements in place to safeguard learners at the college aged 14 to 16. Staff know how to refer learners to the appropriate channels, for example the local authority designated safeguarding officers, when required.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should address the variation in the quality of education on different campuses and courses, particularly the weaknesses in the quality of A-level provision. They should ensure that teachers:
 - set consistently high expectations, particularly in relation to attendance, punctuality and the level of learners' motivation and engagement
 - assess learners' knowledge and understanding at the beginning of their programme
 - carry out timely reviews, so they can regularly assess the progress learners make over time
 - check how well learners acquire new knowledge and skills, to help consolidate and reinforce what they have learned.
- Managers and teachers should improve the quality of education on GCSE and functional skills English and mathematics courses for learners aged 16 to 18 so

that a higher proportion of learners achieve. They should reinforce to learners the importance of attending lessons for these subjects.

- Managers should ensure that they alleviate disruptions to scheduling and timetables, particularly in the first few weeks of the course.
- Managers involved in coordinating the apprenticeship programme should improve communication with employers. They should ensure employers and the apprentices' managers know about the progress their apprentices make. Apprentices' managers should play a more central role in ensuring apprentices have the opportunity to acquire and practise newly acquired skills at work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130421
Address	Regents Park Centre Longford Street London NW1 3HB
Contact number	020 7700 9333
Website	www.capitalccg.ac.uk
CEO	Roy O'Shaugnessy
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	The Chicken Shed Theatre Trust Morson Human Resources Ltd Risual Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider’s most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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

Peter Nelson, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Steve Stanley	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sue Hasty	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Rebecca Jennings	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Saher Nijabat	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Gayle Saundry	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Steve Lambert	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Mike Finn	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jane Hughes`	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Francoise Beregovoi	Ofsted Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Preston	Ofsted Inspector
Christina Christou	Ofsted Inspector
Saskia Niderost	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Griffin	Ofsted Inspector

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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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