

Short inspection of Weymouth College

Inspection dates:

4–5 March 2020

Outcome

Weymouth College continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Weymouth College is a further education provider in Dorset, operating from four main sites. The largest curriculum areas are construction, media, transportation operations, health and social care, and engineering. Most learners are following vocational courses, and a small minority are following AS- and A-level programmes.

The largest group of learners are between 16 and 18 years of age. Just over half of these are studying at level 2 and below. The college has just over 400 adult learners. Around two-thirds of these are studying at level 2 and below. There are around 380 apprentices, divided fairly equally between 16- to 18-year olds and adults. Around half of the apprentices are studying apprenticeships at level 3. The college also offers apprenticeships in manufacturing technologies, construction, business administration, and hospitality and catering. Ninety-five learners are in receipt of high-needs funding and study vocational mainstream or foundation programmes.

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

Weymouth College is an enjoyable and supportive place to study for most learners. They value the individual guidance they receive from staff. Most learners appreciate the relaxed, friendly and caring culture, which staff have worked hard to create. Learners welcome the approach to treat them as adults and the independence this brings. They get on with their work but are confident about asking for help when they need it. The large majority are treated respectfully by staff and learners.

Most learners feel their courses prepare them well for their planned next steps. Advice and guidance from college staff, local employers and regional universities ensure learners are well informed about their options for careers and further training. Those learners who undertake work experience value how this enriches and deepens their learning. This helps them to make links in lessons between theory and workplace practice. However, staff do not prepare learners on foundation learning courses well enough for life after college. These learners are unclear about the further options available to them.

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

Leaders have aligned the curriculum with local and regional employment priorities carefully. They take advantage of funding opportunities by linking elements of their provision to the local enterprise partnership's priorities. For example, managers have invested in resources to teach learners how to service hybrid cars, and have bought new engineering equipment, supported by local enterprise partnership funding. Leaders place a high priority on maintaining access for learners in specialist provision, which would not otherwise be available in the local area. As a result, learners have access to a wide range of specialist training opportunities at successive levels.

Managers have developed education programmes that offer most learners good opportunities to take positive next steps within their studies or careers. For example, in media, learners study courses from level 1 to level 6. They develop impressive practical skills and gain valuable qualifications, which support their ability to progress to higher education and employment. However, managers have not ensured that foundation studies programmes meet the needs of learners well enough.

College careers advisers support learners well by providing good-quality, individual advice and guidance. They coordinate closely with the vocational teaching teams and learning facilitators, ensuring all learners receive appropriate support and guidance when they need it. Managers also arrange careers and higher education fairs, supported by universities and local employers. These are well attended by learners. As a result, most learners are clear about the jobs, education or training they can consider once they complete their studies.

In most subject areas, teachers use learners' prior knowledge and personal experiences well to help them acquire the new knowledge and skills they need. Teachers use information about individual learners to inform what, when and how they teach. For example, in level 1 health and social care, teachers develop learners' confidence and resilience at the start of the course before exploring emotionally challenging case studies involving safeguarding. As a result, learners feel comfortable discussing difficult issues and have developed a deep understanding of safeguarding.

In apprenticeships, assessors plan training that links well to what learners know at the start of their course and the requirements of their jobs. For example, an early focus on improving learners' presentation skills supports business administration apprentices in their workplaces. However, teachers do not routinely use education, health and care plans well enough to develop effective personalised training for learners on foundation studies programmes. As a result, many of the learners on these programmes are not well prepared to move on to other courses or training after college.

Governors have high levels of appropriate experience. They challenge senior leaders well. They have high expectations for the standard of training at the college. As a

result, senior leaders are clear about the areas they need to improve. Leaders balance carefully the college's financial stability with the need to invest in continuous improvement. Leaders act promptly when underperformance is identified and, as a result, the vast majority of learners do well in their studies and are happy with the education and training they receive. For example, leaders' recent actions to improve the consistency of apprentices' experience has had positive impacts. However, managers are not yet sharing the very best teaching practice between curriculum areas effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team is appropriately qualified and works well with managers and staff to keep learners safe. The team identifies vulnerable learners swiftly and provides effective support. The team has, and makes good use of, excellent partnership arrangements with local groups and services.

A small number of students do not have enough knowledge about extremist or radicalised behaviour to ensure that they can keep themselves safe while online or in the wider community.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure all learners on foundation studies receive personalised training, advice and guidance which enhances their employment opportunities and independence.
- Share good or better practice across the college and ensure all teachers have an opportunity to develop their teaching skills.
- Ensure all learners know how to keep themselves safe online and in their personal lives.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130653
Address	Cranford Avenue Weymouth Dorset DT4 7LQ
Contact number	01305 761100
Website	http://www.weymouth.ac.uk/
Principal	Nigel Evans
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	10 November 2015
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Weymouth College was judged to be good in November 2015.

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal performance and delivery, 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

Paul James, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Zimmerman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Louise Rowley	Ofsted Inspector
Esther Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Paterson	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Fawcus	Her Majesty's 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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