

Inspection of Cornwall College

Inspection dates: 8 to 11 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

The Cornwall College Group comprises seven campuses in Cornwall and two in Devon: general further education campuses (Camborne and St Austell) and land-based studies campuses (Stoke Climsland, Bicton, Rosewarne and Newquay). Highly specialist provision takes place at Falmouth Marine School. The college has a dedicated Engineering Skills Centre at Sisna Park in Plymouth. It also provides education and training in outreach centres and with many local employers and partners, including higher education at the Eden Project.

The college provides a wide range of vocational and further and higher education courses and apprenticeships, from pre-entry level to level 7, and provision for learners with high needs. At the time of the inspection, there were 2201 16-to-18-year-old students, 1,970 adult learners, who were mainly on vocational programmes, and 1,607 apprentices. There were some 221 students in receipt of high needs funding.

Most students and apprentices study on courses related to agriculture, horticulture, animal management, engineering, construction and building services, hair and beauty, health, social care, and children, schools and families. A growing number of adult students also study on health and social care and counselling courses. In

addition, many 16-to-18-year-old students enrol on creative and digital arts and media, and uniformed public services courses.

At the time of the inspection, the college worked with nine subcontractors mostly on adult learning programmes in health and social care. Contracts with the three apprenticeship providers were ending and had small numbers of apprentices.

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

Students and apprentices enjoy attending the college. Students appreciate the knowledge and experience of their teachers, which motivates them to achieve their best. They value the new practical and vocational skills and knowledge that they acquire. Apprentices revel in their training and take pride in what they do and assume more responsibility at work.

Students and apprentices benefit from learning in a wide range of high-quality practical teaching facilities, such as workshops, studios and commercial units. Learners in horticulture, hair and beauty, construction and light vehicle maintenance report how they are motivated by working in learning environments that match industry standards.

Students are supported well by staff if they need help. Staff deal swiftly and confidently with any concerns students have. Students benefit from opportunities to explore their understanding of consent and healthy relationships in a mature and age-appropriate way. Students find staff approachable and appreciate how they make time to listen to them.

Students and apprentices benefit from the strong culture of mutual respect and understanding that leaders and managers have created. Staff create a calm and inclusive environment in which most students and apprentices can study and learn.

Students and apprentices respect and support each other in the classroom and respond well to the direction of teachers. Learning coaches support learners with high needs well to manage their behaviour themselves. Younger students develop their confidence and become more independent and responsible as they progress through their course. They attend activities and sessions that promote well-being and healthy lifestyles.

Leaders have created a strong ethos of high attendance and punctuality. Most students and apprentices understand the importance of attendance in preparing them for employment and in supporting their learning. Teachers support students to catch up with their work if they miss lessons. Too many students do not attend literacy and numeracy lessons.

Teachers and trainers use their industry experience well to demonstrate to students and apprentices the expected standards of behaviour. For example, students develop self-discipline, respect and teamworking ethos in uniformed services.

Students and apprentices are safe at college and at their workplaces. Learners consistently wear their lanyards, and younger students attend tutorials where they learn about safe driving, the risks of drugs and alcohol and how to stay safe online. Apprentices adopt safe working practices at work. Most students and apprentices understand how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremist views. They have recently modelled a major incident where students and apprentices practised

'run, hide and tell' procedures. Although most students and apprentices are knowledgeable about extremist groups, some are less aware about local threats.

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

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and governors have transformed the culture at the college. Governors and leaders have high expectations for learners. Leaders are passionate about the power of education to change lives and benefit the wider community. They focus consistently on learners and their learning and well-being. They place a high priority on the importance of good teaching. Leaders have communicated this message to staff, who share the same high expectations for learners.

Staff appreciate the much-improved communication from senior leaders, which both helps them to understand current priorities and challenges them to meet the expected standards.

Governance is highly effective. Skilled, experienced and motivated governors take great pride in their college and know the needs of their communities well. They provide confident strategic leadership. They know the college well and have held senior managers to account through a rapid period of improvement.

Governors, senior leaders and managers have worked relentlessly to establish the college as an influential partner in the region. They work productively with local and regional stakeholders to offer a curriculum that meets the needs of learners, the community and local industry. Working closely with Truro and Penwith College, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly local enterprise partnership, the local education authority and local schools, senior leaders have adapted the curriculum well to meet local needs and build on the strengths of the college. The college makes a positive and vital contribution to the development of vocational skills, especially in the land-based, construction and building service, engineering, hospitality and catering, health and social care, and hair and beauty sectors.

Leaders have taken carefully considered steps to improve the quality of education. Managers and teachers are held accountable for the progress of their learners. Leaders and managers monitor, challenge and support staff and subcontractors to continue to improve the quality of their provision. This is having a positive impact on the progress learners are making in gaining new skills and knowledge.

Leaders have improved the quality of teaching and training through a range of effective strategies, including high-quality professional development, a dedicated support team of skilled practitioners, recruitment of new, well-qualified and experienced staff, and refreshing industrial skills for teachers. For example, engineering teachers have spent time at a local eco-technology company to update their knowledge of renewable energies.

Teachers plan their teaching carefully and logically so that students and apprentices initially develop the essential skills and knowledge they need before moving on to more complex work. For example, in engineering, teachers rightfully prioritise teaching the practical skills, such as the safe use of lathes, early in the course, and in boat-building, teachers demonstrate joinery by working on single joints before moving on to more complex ones.

Teachers and trainers use their extensive skills and experience from industry to inform their teaching well. They teach learners practical skills to high standards through clear explanation, demonstration and repetition, so that the skills become automatic. As a result, learners become competent in the skills they need for their next steps in learning or employment and increasing proportions of learners are achieving their qualifications. Previously, and largely due to COVID-19 restrictions, apprentices did not make swift enough progress, and despite recent actions that managers have taken, a few apprentices will not achieve within the planned timescale.

In a minority of vocational areas, teachers do not explain well enough the theory that underpins practice. As a result, learners cannot always remember the reasons for carrying out procedures.

Most teachers and trainers use questioning, repetition and assessment appropriately to ensure that students and apprentices remember what they have been taught. They also use this information to evaluate the progress that their students and apprentices are making and to provide clear and precise feedback to students and apprentices. They plan further teaching where assessment identifies gaps in students' and apprentices' understanding.

Importantly, since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have improved the curriculum for learners with high needs. Staff work closely with community partners, such as local schools, local authorities, employers and parents and carers, to ensure that the provision now matches the needs of students. Managers ensure that most learners benefit from an individualised curriculum, which balances the development of independence, vocational skills and preparation for next steps well. Most students make good progress in terms of moving on to higher levels of learning, or to employment, supported internships or independent living. Students on higher level courses make good progress.

In adult learning, leaders provide a strong vocational offer that prepares adults well for employment. However, managers recognise that the recently developed strategy to expand the number of vocational adult programmes and a smaller number of adult literacy courses has yet to produce an increase in numbers.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, most students on study programmes have been able to take part in work-experience placements. This has helped them develop the attitudes and behaviours they need for work and to practise and refine their practical skills. In a few industries, such as agricultural engineering, students have been able to use the very latest technology and diagnostic equipment available.

Employers work closely with managers to ensure that the apprenticeship curriculum reflects current practice and the needs of industry. Employers and trainers ensure a productive link between on- and off-the-job training. For example, horticultural apprentices successfully apply their new knowledge about plant identification and the appropriate growing conditions at work.

Engineering apprentices confidently apply newly acquired mathematical skills on their course. For example, they can calculate volumes, pressures, drag factors and tolerance levels accurately. Performing arts and dance students on study programmes learn to provide and receive professional criticism well. Adult students on hair and beauty courses learn to communicate well with a diverse range of customers.

While students develop useful skills in English and mathematics through vocational teaching and training, too many learners do not secure the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve qualifications in these subjects. Leaders and managers recognise this and have well-conceived plans to continue this improvement work.

Leaders and managers have implemented an effective personal development curriculum. Students and apprentices have access to a range of activities to develop their interests and experiences that extends beyond the academic and vocational curriculum. Plumbing and gas apprentices understand the importance of showing respect and good communication with other trades while on site. Most students participate in enrichment activities, including trips and visits, clubs and societies, community projects and competitions. As a result, they develop a wider range of skills and a broader perspective on their learning.

Leaders and managers rightly prioritise the provision of ongoing careers guidance for students and apprentices. They provide universal, targeted and specialist careers education, information, advice and guidance that benefit most learners and apprentices. Most students and apprentices are clear about their next steps and many students and apprentices achieve them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Students and apprentices are safe at the college and know whom to contact if they have a concern.

Leaders have ensured that staff responsible for safeguarding are appropriately trained. They have established strong links with external agencies, which they use to support students or apprentices with safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding staff have effective processes for recording incidents, and they take appropriate action, involving external agencies when appropriate. Staff reflect on these instances well and make refinements to procedures. Staff monitor students' attendance very closely and follow up unexplained absences promptly.

Leaders ensure that staff are recruited safely and follow safer recruitment procedures. All new staff receive appropriate training and existing staff have refresher training to ensure that their knowledge is current.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders need to improve the quality of teaching in literacy and numeracy lessons so that students make better progress from their starting points, attend in higher numbers and achieve their qualifications.
- Senior leaders must swiftly implement the new adult learning strategy and engage more hard-to-reach learners, including adults needing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Managers must further develop the few teachers who are not yet sufficiently skilled in teaching theory topics to students, so that students understand the link between theory and practice.

Provider details

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Website	www.cornwall.ac.uk
Principal	John Evans
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	14 to 17 May 2019
Main subcontractors	Cornwall Marine Network Learning Curve South West Skills Academy The Skills Network Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change Argyle Community Trust

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, group 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 visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

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