

Inspection of Southampton City College

Inspection dates: 8 to 11 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Southampton City College is a small general further education college serving the city of Southampton. The college has a main city centre campus and a specialist marine centre in Woolston. The vast majority of the college's students and apprentices come from areas of the city with higher than average levels of deprivation. Educational attainment in the region is lower than in other parts of the country and around two thirds of students at the college are studying courses at level 2 or below.

At the time of the inspection, the college had 953 16- to 18-year-old students on vocational programmes, 1,067 adult learners, most of whom are studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes, and 43 students in receipt of high-needs funding. Around 350 apprentices currently study on a range of apprenticeship standards at levels 2 and 3 and one legacy apprenticeship framework.

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

Students, including those with high needs, learn in an inclusive and caring environment at the college. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of students who may have been out of education for a long time or who have had a negative experience in education previously. Adult students reflect positively on the supportive environment at the college that enables them to build new skills and grow in confidence, both in learning and in their personal lives. For example, students on ESOL courses learn to speak independently in everyday situations, such as talking to their children's school. Students on the pathways programme build communication and customer service skills through their work in a production kitchen.

Too many students on education and training programmes do not attend well, and staff do not challenge this consistently. Teachers do not ensure that students who miss lessons and fall behind catch up. Although in most areas students can access the resources and activities used in class and can submit work online, very few students choose to catch up with the work they have missed when absent. As a result, they are not making the progress that they could.

Most students feel positive about their studies and are respectful of their peers and their teachers. For example, students in the art studio quickly develop appropriate behaviours, respectfully exploring creative styles and becoming accustomed and resilient to hearing critical feedback from teachers and their peers.

Most students on practical courses demonstrate their good understanding of safe working practices. Students on construction programmes wear correct personal protective equipment, and marine engineering apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the regulations around the operation of lifting equipment. However, not all staff set high expectations of behaviour for students and apprentices or implement college policies consistently. For example, teachers do not ask students in the carpentry workshop to remove earphones, when wearing them is against the college's policy.

Staff have not ensured that students on education programmes for young people fully understand how to secure work, and too many students do not take advantage of the helpful drop-in support the college provides. Students who are planning to go on to higher education are well prepared for applying to university. They benefit from talks and visits to local universities, which helps them make informed choices. Dedicated careers staff from the 'Futures' team support business students with their personal statements and applications very effectively. In access to higher education courses, adult students have received offers of university places and most move on to their first-choice university and course. For students wanting to move straight to employment, the support available to them is not sufficiently good.

Apprentices do not make sufficiently rapid progress from their starting points because teachers do not take workplace experiences into consideration to tailor individual learning plans. As a result, apprentices too often repeat practical skills,

and teachers do not always link theory to apprentices' workplace experience well enough.

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

External decision-makers have yet to resolve questions about the college's longstanding financial position, and about the strategic alignment of education and training provision in the city. Much leadership time has necessarily been devoted to negotiations with, and representations to, external bodies. This has slowed progress in other aspects of college improvement. Over the past six years, public debate about the college's future has also had a negative impact on staff morale. As a result, leaders' efforts to provide high-quality vocational training for students aged 16 to 18 have only been partly successful.

Leaders and managers currently provide a good range of vocational courses and appropriate routes for learners with low levels of qualification. They ensure that the curriculum provides clear routes for students to move on to further learning.

Leaders have made some improvements since the previous inspection, but not enough. Senior leaders do not check the quality of education closely enough. Consequently, they have not identified many of the weaknesses that inspectors found during the inspection and have not moved swiftly to put in place effective methods to deal with those that they have identified.

Governors and senior leaders do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. For example, while they provide a wide range of professional development for staff, they do not monitor the quality of this or the impact it has on students. Leaders do not ensure that managers review their teachers' performance effectively and they do not expect course teams to review the quality of the courses they teach. Too often, senior leaders do not ensure that their expectations of how quality will be improved are met by the managers and teachers who implement them. Leaders and managers do support well those staff taking their first steps from being industry practitioners to teaching.

Leaders and managers have increased the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications in some weaker areas, such as business, by revising the curriculum. In these areas, students and apprentices learn new knowledge and skills that allow them to achieve their qualifications and become more independent in life and at work. For example, business students design digital marketing campaigns. Painting and decorating students strip wallpaper safely using a steamer. Students with high needs learn cooking and laundry skills and enjoy participating in online sessions on pet and animal care.

In some education programmes for young people, including the entry-level internship for students with high needs, the curriculum is not ambitious enough. Teachers do not routinely challenge students to aspire to do better. For example, teachers in art and design do not use sufficiently challenging tasks or language that

promote high expectations when setting assignments. Teachers in motor vehicle maintenance do not encourage students to attempt extension tasks once they achieve a pass standard, and most students do not see the value in undertaking a work experience placement that is sector related. Students on the entry-level internship programme have only limited access to planned work experience and are not currently on track to meet the recommended minimum placement time. There is no evidence from this programme of positive progression to employment. Leaders and managers have planned an ambitious curriculum for adult learners and young people who want to access higher education. As a result, most achieve well and progress to their intended destination.

In too many areas, teachers do not monitor or record progress effectively. As a result, some students and apprentices are not clear about the progress they are making, the target grades they are aiming for or the steps they need to take to improve their grades. Teachers in marine engineering and wood occupations do not set challenging targets at apprentices' workplace reviews. The targets they do set do not have sufficient focus on linking apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices do not make the progress they could, and some needlessly repeat tasks for which they already have the required skills. However, in adult learning programmes, such as access to higher education, and a few education programmes for young people, such as health and social care, tutors use assessment well to check students' understanding and inform future learning.

Students' and apprentices' understanding of the risks to their safety and of extremism and radicalisation is underdeveloped. Leaders and managers plan a broad curriculum that aims to develop their understanding of topics such as keeping mentally and physically healthy, age-appropriate sexual health, and awareness of harassment and violence. However, they do not successfully implement it for all students and apprentices. Staff do not ensure that students and apprentices understand how to apply this learning to their own lives and situations.

Leaders manage the transition of students with high needs to college very well. Staff ensure that students are placed on appropriate courses and that they address students' anxieties and concerns prior to enrolment. Staff have planned the foundation learning curriculum, except for the internship, well. They place high importance on developing confidence, communication and basic skills to ensure that students are well prepared for employment, further training and independent living.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Students and apprentices feel safe at college and in the workplace. They know whom to contact if they have a concern, including over sexual harassment. Staff support students and apprentices well when they disclose a safeguarding or welfare concern and keep comprehensive records of this support.

Leaders follow safer recruitment procedures. They assess risks when staff records are incomplete and take the necessary action to ensure that staff are supervised appropriately. Managers responsible for safeguarding, including the designated governor, are well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable about the risks their students and apprentices face and how to support them, including using external agencies.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Senior leaders must set clear expectations for managers and staff and give them the knowledge, support and appropriate accountability for making rapid improvements to the quality of education.
- Managers must ensure that apprentices' learning plans take account of individual starting points and better link off- and on-the-job learning, to enable them to make the swifter progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that students understand how the personal development curriculum relates to their own lives and situations.
- Teachers must provide all students and apprentices with clear and timely feedback so they can use this to improve their work and skills.
- Leaders and managers should review delivery of the internship programme for students with high needs so that they benefit from high-quality work experience.
- Leaders and managers should improve advice and guidance for students on education programmes for young people to ensure that they are effectively supported for transition into the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130696
Address	St Mary Street Southampton Hampshire SO14 1AR
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Website	www.southampton-city.ac.uk
Principal	Sarah Stannard
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	11 to 14 December 2018
Main subcontractors	MYF Training Limited Itchen College

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 and monitoring visit reports. 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 students, apprentices, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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