

Inspection of New College Swindon

Inspection dates:

24 to 27 January 2023

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	Requires Improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires Improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires Improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

New College Swindon (NCS) is a large general further education college. NCS is the result of a merger between Swindon College and New College in August 2020. NCS has two main campuses and a small adult learning centre in the town. The large A-level provision is taught at the Queens Drive campus, with vocational courses at the North Star and Queens Drive campuses.

Around 8,000 adults, 3,600 students aged 16 to 18, 900 apprentices and 200 students with high needs study at the college. The college offers training programmes from entry level to level 6.

The college works with 11 subcontractors. Around one tenth of the college's funding is allocated to courses provided by subcontractors throughout the country. A large majority of these courses are for students aged 16 to 18 studying performing arts and for adults studying health and social care.

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

Students and apprentices study in a respectful learning environment because staff encourage them to interact positively. Teachers consider their use of teaching techniques carefully. For example, in GCSE mathematics, students aged 16 to 18 can use mini whiteboards to respond to teacher questions, which helps students to feel confident enough to contribute to lessons.

Too few students aged 16 to 18, adults, and students with high needs attend their lessons. Managers have not improved attendance quickly enough. This means that valuable opportunities to learn are missed. Too few students aged 16 to 18 and adults stay to complete and achieve their qualifications.

Adults and apprentices do not receive impartial careers guidance. This is because leaders and managers do not ensure that adults and apprentices receive this information as part of the curriculum effectively. For example, apprentices studying the electrotechnical programme are not made sufficiently aware of training opportunities available to them at a higher level. As a result, too few adults and apprentices are well informed about their future choices. However, adults studying the access to higher education in healthcare programme value the guidance that their teachers provide.

Too few students aged 16 to 18 know enough about how to stay physically and mentally healthy. For example, they do not receive enough guidance on maintaining their own mental well-being. This is because leaders and managers do not ensure that these students follow a curriculum that includes these wider topics early enough.

Most students aged 16 to 18 and apprentices are taught well about how to be tolerant and respectful. For example, assessors for the electrotechnical apprenticeship programme encourage apprentices to relate these values to their own experiences of the workplace.

Students and apprentices study in an inclusive environment. For example, leaders and managers have worked effectively with students aged 16 to 18 to form an LGBTQ+ student group. As a result, leaders and managers have a greater understanding of students' views and the challenges they face.

Students and apprentices feel safe. However, a small minority of students aged 16 to 18 struggle to recall what they have been taught about identifying the signs and risks associated with radicalisation. A small minority of apprentices are not taught enough about local risks.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a limited contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders' and managers' involvement of relevant stakeholders in the curriculum design and implementation is limited. This is because they involve employers and other stakeholders in too few areas of the curriculum sufficiently well enough. For example, employers in plumbing and electrotechnical services do not have enough opportunities to shape the apprenticeship curriculum. Stakeholders in light vehicle maintenance and repair, in business studies and in biology are not involved enough to ensure that young people are provided with the learning opportunities they need. As a result, leaders and managers have a limited insight into whether the curriculum and training they provide meets the training needs of their students and apprentices.

Leaders engage well with a wide range of stakeholders at a strategic level to ensure they are aware of the broad priority skills areas. They are addressing the low uptake of qualifications at a higher level through their development of the Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology. They have successfully built the infrastructure required to give students good opportunities to learn skills using high-quality, industry-relevant resources. For example, students aged 16 to 18 studying creative media use high-quality production technology in the college's film and television studio at its North Star campus.

However, leaders and managers plans to meet a minority of skills priorities through the curriculum they offer have not been considered sufficiently well enough. For example, curriculum plans to meet green skills training needs are underdeveloped in construction and in automotive. As a result, governors, leaders and managers are not clear about their contribution to meeting Swindon and Wiltshire local enterprise priorities for green skills.

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

Leaders and managers have successfully secured support from most staff in developing a one-college ethos since its merger. They have bridged the gap between the two predecessor colleges effectively. This has led to new teams of staff sharing their knowledge and skills to collaboratively plan the curriculum. Leaders and managers have overseen a significant investment in resources that benefit students across the college. For example, students and apprentices studying health and social care programmes make good use of the college's hospital ward and specialist medical equipment at its Queens Drive campus.

Leaders' and managers' actions to provide a high-quality curriculum for all students and apprentices are not yet widespread. Too few improvement strategies used by leaders and managers allow them to monitor the quality of the curriculum effectively. As a result, the quality of education is too variable. This means that too few students and apprentices receive a high-quality learning experience.

Leaders' and managers' strategies to deal with the low attendance and achievement of students have not been effective. Despite these strategies, too few students and

apprentices attend and achieve. The quality improvement plans used by leaders do not focus sufficiently well on the wider curriculum. For example, too few students aged 16 to 18 undertake meaningful work experience or work-related activity. As a result, too few students and apprentices study an ambitious curriculum.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that employers know enough about the training that apprentices receive. Assessors' communication with employers is ineffective, and progress reviews do not always identify the behaviours that apprentices need. For example, assessors do not link on- and off-the-job training to what apprentices learn in their workplace effectively. As a result, too few apprentices make the expected progress.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that all students with high needs achieve well enough. For example, students with high needs are not always encouraged to use assistive technologies to promote their independence. Too few students with high needs who study on vocational and academic programmes are supported well enough by staff to make progress in line with their peers.

Teachers and assessors plan the content of the curriculum for most students and apprenticeships logically. For example, teachers of the healthcare assistant practitioner apprenticeship teach underpinning anatomy and physiology content. They then ensure that apprentices' skills are consolidated within the workplace before teaching specialised content. As a result, most students and apprentices develop knowledge over time.

Managers and teachers of community-based programmes provide adults with effective support to improve their lives. For example, asylum seekers and refugees study well-planned programmes designed for people who speak English as an additional language. Managers work well with Swindon Council and local charities to support individual needs such as living accommodation.

Most teachers and assessors are well qualified. They use their specialism to help students and apprentices improve their knowledge and skills. For example, teachers in healthcare use their clinical skills in the college's hospital wards to enable students to simulate realistic scenarios. As a result, students and apprentices can link the taught content to practical examples.

Leaders and managers have overseen a large amount of subcontracted provision that does not benefit the skills needs for the area of Swindon. Too few adults studying construction or warehousing in subcontracted provision receive a high-quality curriculum. This is because leaders and managers at NCS do not monitor the quality of this training effectively. The large number of students aged 16 to 18 studying performing arts outside of Swindon do receive a high-quality curriculum. These specialist programmes are provided by the British and Irish Modern Music institute.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that the college meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding. Students and apprentices feel safe when at college. Staff are vigilant, and people who should be on the campuses are easily identifiable. Students and apprentices know who to contact if they have a safeguarding concern.

Leaders and managers have not added enough staff to the safeguarding team to meet the increased number of referrals. As a result, a small minority of referrals are not dealt with quickly enough.

Students and apprentices in vocational subjects are taught how to practise their skills in a safe manner. For example, students aged 16 to 18 studying animal care know and wear the necessary personal protective equipment. Students with high needs on entry-level training programmes are taught how to use kitchen equipment safely when preparing meals.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all students and apprentices benefit from a high-quality and ambitious curriculum.
- Improve involvement with relevant stakeholders in curriculum design to ensure that college training programmes meet skills needs.
- Improve the quality of the subcontracted provision for adults.
- Improve engagement with employers for apprenticeship programmes so that training plans are more effective.
- Improve the achievement of students aged 16 to 18, adults, and students with high needs.
- Improve the attendance of students aged 16 to 18, adults, and students with high needs.
- Ensure that safeguarding referrals are always dealt with swiftly.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130851
Address	New College Drive Swindon Wiltshire SN3 1AH
Contact number	01793611470
Website	http://www.newcollege.ac.uk/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Carole Kitching
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	BIMM Limited CECOS Computing International Limited Inner Flame Learning Curve Group Limited Quality Transport Training Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, higher education and curriculum, 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.

Inspection team

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