

# Inspection of Petroc

Inspection dates:

8 to 11 October 2024

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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

## Information about this provider

Petroc is a general further education college with two campuses, one in Barnstaple and one in Tiverton. The college offers academic and vocational courses from entry level to level 6. It provides education programmes for young people, courses for adults, apprenticeships and courses for learners with high needs. The largest subject areas include A levels, construction and health and social care.

The North Devon campus in Barnstaple offers a full range of courses, including all the college's A-level and T-level courses. The Tiverton campus is more focused, with most courses being for learners with high needs in subjects such as foundation learning and preparing for adulthood. They also teach a limited range of construction and health and social care courses.

At the time of the inspection, 2273 learners were studying on education programmes for young people, with just under half studying at level 3. The college has 408 learners studying adult courses across 13 subject areas, with the largest numbers in English and health and social care. Several Skills Bootcamps for adult learners, including in construction, were running during the inspection.

The college had 651 apprentices across 40 different apprenticeships, with the

majority studying at level 2. Most of the apprentices are over 19 years old. The largest numbers are in construction and health and care subjects.

Petroc has 425 learners with education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Of these, 258 study vocational and academic courses, while 167 study on courses specifically designed for learners with high needs.

The college works with two subcontractors. One is a provider that works with a very small number of 16- to 18-year-old learners and learners with high needs. The other teaches a few apprentices in health and care.

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

Learners' rates of attendance on too many courses are too low. Learners who do not attend are not supported well enough to catch up with their studies. Young learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons is very low. Apprentices' rates of attendance to training at college are high.

Too many young learners, adults and those with high needs do not stay on their course until the end. About a third of younger learners and adults do not achieve their qualifications. Learners with high needs achieve slightly better than their peers, but it is still too low. Learners on T levels achieve significantly better than their peers. Leaders have improved initial advice, guidance and support for apprentices. These developments have helped more apprentices to stay on their programmes and successfully complete their apprenticeships.

Young learners, including those with high needs, do not undertake enough meaningful work experience or work-related activities. This is because staff do not give them the opportunities to take part. Leaders recognise rightly the need to provide purposeful opportunities for learners to gain experience of the workplace, particularly on courses specifically designed to increase employability skills or linked to vocational sectors. Learners studying on T-level courses complete meaningful work placements that are integrated well into their course.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that younger learners develop a wide enough understanding of topics such as healthy eating, fundamental British values and how to protect themselves from extremist views. Consequently, young learners have only a superficial knowledge of how to prepare for life in modern Britain. While leaders have introduced a new personal development curriculum that covers these topics, it is too early to see the full impact of this. Learners studying A levels and T levels are better informed and have a solid understanding of these topics. Learners with high needs on courses designed specifically for them are taught about citizenship and the rule of law effectively.

Learners and apprentices who stay until the end of their course, develop the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, courses designed specifically for learners with high needs focus on key life and work skills such as what constitutes a healthy relationship. Apprentices gain valuable skills that they practise and use in the workplace. This helps these learners and apprentices with their next steps into employment or further training.

Learners and apprentices are taught in calm, orderly and professional classrooms and workshops. Staff create an environment that learners and apprentices feel rightly is inclusive. Most learners and apprentices are mutually respectful of each other and the college staff. Learners and apprentices value the friendly and supportive staff. They participate enthusiastically in their studies, interacting productively with lecturers and peers, asking and responding to questions and taking notes.

Most learners and apprentices develop their character, confidence and resilience. For example, adult learners gain confidence in public speaking and how to complete effective presentations.

Learners develop English and mathematics skills in the context of their subjects during lessons. A large proportion of learners study towards English and mathematics qualifications. The learners that attend these lessons value these qualifications and understand their importance for progressing to further study or employment.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and rarely experience harassment or discrimination. However, a few younger learners experience some low-level name-calling by their peers. Leaders and managers ensure that learners know who to speak to and how to report any concerns, which they deal with swiftly and effectively.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders collaborate with civic, economic and development bodies, community partners, schools, universities and employers well. They are well represented on those bodies that influence and invest in skills development. Leaders work closely with the Devon chamber, Devon Council, North Devon Council and Torridge District Council to plan curriculums that provide the skills most employers need. Leaders ensure that the college contributes to social and environmental priorities such as the North Devon Biosphere to protect habitats in the area for people and nature.

College leaders work well with community partners in north and mid-Devon to reduce social inequality. They work closely with local charities to swiftly establish education and training courses that support refugees to gain new skills, helping their integration and resettlement. Additionally, leaders collaborate effectively with Devon Council to enhance education and training opportunities for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and high needs at the Tiverton campus.

Leaders have established effective partnerships with local schools, leading to the coordination of vocational curriculums for Years 10 and 11 students at local schools. This collaboration provides effective progression pathways in subjects such as sports and hospitality. Additionally, college staff offer personalised advice and guidance to students refusing to attend school, helping them acquire the necessary knowledge and confidence they need to transition to college courses.

Leaders provide strong support for cultural and creative activities in the community. For example, college staff attend heritage skills events in Barnstaple town centre and use Skills Bootcamps to teach heritage construction trades such as stonemasonry and drystone walling.

Leaders have acknowledged that their previous skills strategy did not adequately prioritise manufacturing, engineering and digital skills essential for meeting future

economic and employment needs. This includes clean marine and green technologies and offshore energy, particularly in North Devon. Stakeholders appreciate that the college's new leadership team now listens carefully to their views and consults with them on the content of its new strategic plan.

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

Leaders do not ensure that all younger learners receive appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. As a result, young learners lack knowledge about their options for further education, employment or training when they finish. While learners on A levels are prepared well for higher education, they do not receive enough advice about other opportunities such as apprenticeships. Most adults, apprentices and learners with high needs on courses specifically designed for them receive helpful career guidance.

Leaders and managers make sure that most lecturers effectively use information on what learners and apprentices know when they start. However, in a significant minority of courses, lecturers do not take sufficient account of what learners already know and can do. As a result, not all learners on education programmes for young people and adult learners study appropriate or ambitious courses.

A majority of lecturers use a variety of effective teaching methods to help learners and apprentices develop their knowledge and skills. Most lecturers use questioning well to develop learners' and apprentices' knowledge so that their answers become more detailed and accurate. In apprenticeships, lecturers and assessors use their industry expertise to make appropriate links to learning in the workplace. However, in a significant minority of cases on courses for young learners and adult courses, lecturers do not use effective teaching strategies to help learners know and remember more or challenge learners appropriately.

A majority of lecturers use assessment effectively, providing helpful developmental feedback to help learners and apprentices understand how to improve. For example, T-level assessors record professional discussions and offer constructive, well-referenced feedback on learners' progress and areas for improvement. However, a minority of lecturers do not use assessment effectively, leading to some learners' misconceptions not being corrected before their examinations.

Leaders have significantly changed their approach to quality assurance and improvement. Carefully considered processes now support managers in developing an increasingly accurate view of the quality of education and training they provide. Leaders recognise rightly that they still need to fully establish a high-performing culture and ensure that the education and training they provide are of a good or better standard. In the most effective instances, such as apprenticeships, leaders have overseen notable improvements to the quality of training and outcomes have improved.

The board of governors acknowledges rightly that more needs to be done to ensure that the quality of education learners and apprentices receive is of a high standard. The refreshed board now consists of new board members. The board now participates in meaningful processes and discusses well with leaders, learners, parents and the community the things that need to improve. This enables it to remain connected with the perspectives of stakeholders. Members understand the challenges the college faces well and the necessity for improvement to the overall outcomes for learners and apprentices. It is too early to assess the full impact of the new arrangements.

Leaders and managers carefully plan most courses and apprenticeships to ensure they are well coordinated and sequenced. For example, on level 3 adult access to higher education courses, a study skills programme has been adapted to include elements of presentation skills to support assignments involving presentations. Level 2 hairdressing professional apprentices start by learning about health and safety. They then move on to skin and hair structure so that they have the foundation and underpinning knowledge to learn practical skills such as shampooing and blow drying. This enables learners and apprentices to develop knowledge and skills that will support them in their future learning and employment.

In adult Skills Bootcamps, leaders and lecturers provide appropriate and challenging subject matter. Lecturers consult employers on the content taught. Lecturers sequence the topics logically, allowing adults to build on previous knowledge before moving on to more complex tasks. For instance, multi-skill construction bootcamp lecturers demonstrate practical aspects effectively such as how to render a wall. Learners then practise rendering entire walls before moving on to more difficult techniques. Adults on these Skills Bootcamps recall previous learning well.

Apprentices' assessors coordinate off- and on-the-job learning effectively. Employers understand thoroughly what their apprentices are learning each week and provide strong support in the workplace. In hairdressing, employers provide comprehensive and effective training for their apprentices. Level 3 business administrator apprentices learn to analyse external factors that impact a business and apply these skills to their companies effectively. This helps apprentices apply and practise what they are learning in college in the workplace.

Leaders and managers have not been effective in planning and teaching qualifications in English and mathematics for apprentices. For those apprentices who need to achieve these qualifications, their attendance at these lessons is too low. Too few apprentices achieve these qualifications, particularly in mathematics, where only a third pass at their first attempt.

Leaders and managers collaborate well with the local authority to develop courses specifically for learners with high needs. This collaboration ensures that the college offers appropriate courses tailored to the needs of these learners. Managers also ensure that the courses for these learners are well planned and based on their annual EHC plan review meetings and targets. For instance, they have created a

new inclusion course to cater for school refusers and those with social, emotional and mental health challenges.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Increase the proportion of learners, including those with high needs, who stay until the end of the course and achieve their qualifications.
- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that learners are on an appropriate and ambitious course.
- Ensure that younger learners receive personal development so that they have an in-depth knowledge of subjects such as healthy eating, fundamental British values and how to protect themselves from extremist views.
- Ensure that younger learners and high-needs learners on courses specifically designed for them get the work experience, careers information and guidance they need to make informed choices.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130646
<b>Address</b>	Old Sticklepath Hill Barnstaple Devon EX31 2BQ
<b>Contact number</b>	01271345291
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.petroc.ac.uk/">www.petroc.ac.uk/</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Kurt Hintz
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 November 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Wings South West Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee and the assistant principal for the faculty of vocational and technical studies as the skills 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

Steve Battersby, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul James	His Majesty's Inspector
Nikki Sendell	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Lacey	Ofsted Inspector
Fern Jest	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Squire	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Caunter	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Rowley	Ofsted Inspector
Cliff Shaw	His Majesty's Inspector
Nick Crombie	His Majesty's Inspector
Lowenna Bradley	His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024