

Inspection of City College Plymouth

Inspection dates: 19 to 22 November 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

City College Plymouth (CCP) is a large general further education college. The college has three campuses in the city centre, the Kings Road main campus, the Centre of Higher Technical Innovation and Maritime Skills and the Piquet Barracks campus. CCP is the largest provider of education and training for young people in Plymouth. At the time of the inspection, there were over 3,400 learners aged between 16 and 18 years, 1,300 apprentices and 1,700 adults studying at the college. There were 268 learners in receipt of high needs funding, of whom 188 were on programmes specifically designed for learners with high needs and around 70 were following vocational programmes. Around 670 learners have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Learners aged 16 to 18 study a range of vocational programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 and qualifications in English and mathematics. The largest vocational courses at level 3 are sports coaching and development and uniformed protective services. At level 2, the largest course is engineering and at level 1 foundation programmes for learning and life. CCP offers thirteen T-level qualifications, including business management and administration, childhood education and healthcare science. The majority of apprentices study engineering and manufacturing related apprenticeships. The majority of adults study English and mathematics

qualifications, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) or access to higher education courses. CCP teaches adult Skills Bootcamps in a range of subjects, including engineering, manufacturing and construction retrofit and leadership and management.

The college works with two subcontractors, who teach sport qualifications to learners aged 16 to 18 and employability skills to adults.

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

Learners' and apprentices' behaviour at college and work is excellent. They attend college well and are punctual to their lessons. They are respectful towards each other and to staff. The large number of learners who use the college's recreational areas to relax, read or play games do so harmoniously. This creates a positive and inviting atmosphere.

Learners and apprentices value the excellent counselling and mental health support they receive. Learners access this support in calm and confidential areas of the college, which encourages them to seek help when they need it. Learners who experience hardship receive exceptional support from staff, who provide them with free food, clothing and personal care items, such as shampoo, toothpaste and sanitary items. Learners and apprentices value the free breakfasts that are made available to them at the college and how this helps them to start their day well.

Nearly all learners participate in the college's extensive enrichment programme. Learners with SEND enjoy playing in their football team. The many clubs and societies learners can join are supplemented by weekly activities, which take place in a variety of locations around the campus to promote healthy lifestyles, such as rowing machine competitions and blood pressure checks. Learners appreciate the subsidised gym membership that they can use to access health facilities in the city at reduced rates. Learners have opportunities through an international scheme to sample what it is like to study and work in other countries, such as Indonesia and Thailand. Learners who study travel and tourism courses value how these opportunities deepen their knowledge of cultures and provide insights into the environmental impact of tourism. Many learners contribute positively to their local communities and support charities. For example, learners studying automotive engineering raised money for a neonatal charity by providing car washing and safety inspections.

Learners enjoy their lessons. Learners studying sports coaching and development respond positively to the short tasks that teachers set, which require them to collaborate and devise responsive coaching plans for different scenarios. Adult learners studying access to higher education health and social care enjoy being asked to explore concepts, such as scientific variability, and then sharing their opinions in lively group discussions. Apprentices studying the apprenticeship in electrical installation value how assessors break down complex units into smaller parts so that they become confident about what they know and can do and feel well prepared for their examinations. However, learners with high needs who study

preparation for adulthood, progression and independence courses, and who have speech, language and communication needs, do not receive the support they need to be able to participate fully in their courses.

Most learners receive effective advice to help them make decisions about their future training and career. The college's expert careers advisers tailor advice through an accessible drop-in service and a range of activities, such as career workshops around the campus. Learners also attend talks from invited employers on topics such as careers in the legal profession and working in healthcare services.

Learners receive age-appropriate information from their teachers about how to maintain healthy sexual relationships. Consequently, most learners have a good knowledge of how to recognise harmful or coercive behaviours.

Most learners know how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation. For example, learners are taught how to recognise changes in behaviour which may indicate that someone is being radicalised. However, a small minority of learners and apprentices have a superficial knowledge of these topics. Most learners have a secure knowledge of fundamental British values and how these apply to their personal lives and studies. For example, learners who are studying hospitality and catering subjects understand well the importance of respecting the views of co-workers and customers. However, apprentices do not know how fundamental British values relate to their lives or work.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at college and at work. They value that staff are approachable and visible throughout the college's campuses. Learners and apprentices are confident that they can report concerns to staff and that these will be taken seriously.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders ensure that the college is influential in supporting Plymouth's local and regional economic and skills development priorities and strategies. Governors have good ties to the civic and commercial sectors of the city and understand well the current and future skills needs of employers. For example, the college's chair of governors chairs the Plymouth Growth Board, whose members include major local employers and public and private sector organisations in the area. Leaders have ensured that the college is an active partner in the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Leaders collaborate effectively with other colleges in the region so that courses they offer are coherently planned across providers, and expertise and resources are shared. This has resulted in the implementation of the South West Institute of Technology and a nuclear curriculum developed in collaboration with the National College for Nuclear and the Babcock International Group.

Leaders work very closely with employers and stakeholders in the area, such as

Plymouth City Council, Devon and Plymouth Chambers of Commerce, and respond well to their training needs. They ensure that much of the college's curriculum accurately reflects local and regional employment and skills. For example, leaders have established effective links between the college's healthcare curriculum and University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust's Derriford Hospital. The college's construction curriculum has strong links with Kier Construction. Leaders have worked closely with employers, such as Princess Yachts, to position the college as the primary provider of training for the maritime sector in the region. However, there remain curriculum areas where leaders do not ensure that skills needs are met well enough. For example, teachers of the T-level qualification in health do not identify well enough the important skills and knowledge learners must gain and do not plan teaching effectively so that learners can link what they learn in the classroom to their work placements.

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

Leaders plan a suitably ambitious curriculum for most learners and apprentices. They ensure that most teachers work effectively with industry and stakeholders to expand the content of the curriculum. For example, learners who study travel and tourism consult with industry specialists to gain insights into job roles within the sector. Apprentices who study automotive engineering develop their knowledge by completing additional qualifications, such as electric and hybrid vehicle system and repair awards. Apprentices who study carpentry and joinery are taught useful extra skills, such as technical drawing. Adult learners studying the Skills Bootcamp in leadership and management complete part of a management qualification and receive extra tuition in digital skills, such as creating formal documents and how to use collaborative online platforms.

Leaders do not ensure that learners with high needs who study preparation for adulthood, progression and independence courses receive an ambitious or well-planned curriculum. Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the quality of education for these courses. They do not ensure that teachers receive the training they need to plan high-quality teaching and support. Leaders do not coordinate the specialist support that learners with SEND need effectively. For example, there is insufficient expertise to support those learners with speech, language and communication needs. Consequently, many of these learners are not able to fully participate in their studies and do not make good enough progress.

Leaders make sure that teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Teachers draw on their knowledge effectively in order to teach their subjects well. For example, teachers of English and mathematics use their experience as subject examiners to prepare learners well for examinations. Many teachers complete useful industry placements to improve their knowledge and skills. Teachers of sports courses introduce additional course content on lifestyle consultations, and teachers of travel and tourism teach the latest processes and procedures in the air passenger industry, such as emergency evacuation procedures. Teachers of maritime and defence apprenticeships make monthly visits to employers so that apprentices are

fully briefed on the latest protocols in the industry as well as developments in engineering technologies. Teachers of apprenticeships use workplace scenarios effectively in order to help learners to relate what they are taught at college to the workplace. For example, apprentices studying maritime and defence engineering are challenged by teachers to assess the causes of faults on frigates. Teachers of Skills Bootcamps use games and simulations in lessons so that learners are excited about what they are learning. For example, they set leadership tasks for learners that they make progressively more challenging through the introduction of unexpected variables, which require new and adapted solutions.

Teachers and assessors set sensible targets for most apprentices. They ensure that employers are fully involved in the reviews of apprentices' progress to plan training. However, assessors rarely review the targets they set for apprentices to know how successfully apprentices apply new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Teachers do not set useful targets for a minority of learners so that they know what they need to do to improve. For example, they set targets for learners to improve their attendance or to complete coursework, but do not set ambitious goals which focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners need to develop.

In a few subjects, teachers do not ensure that the content of the curriculum is taught effectively. In these subjects, teachers do not check that learners are able to understand and remember what they have been taught from earlier topics. In adult access to higher education courses, teachers do not check sufficiently that learners have a secure knowledge of mathematical methods before they move on to the next topic. In uniformed and protective services, teachers do not ensure that learners take notes or are prepared to ask questions when meeting speakers from the armed forces. For learners with high needs, teachers do not use information about their prior knowledge and skills well enough to plan learning, or to make accurate assessments of the progress learners make to help them to improve and develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time.

Leaders have mostly appropriate quality assurance and improvement processes in place. Leaders' actions have supported a significant improvement in the proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship. Governors use their expertise and the information they receive to provide robust challenge to leaders and managers. Leaders work closely with the college's subcontractors and have processes in place to ensure that learners receive a good quality of experience. However, leaders do not always accurately identify weaknesses in the courses for learners with high needs who study preparation for adulthood, progression and independence courses.

A high proportion of adult and young learners achieve their qualifications. Most apprentices who complete their apprenticeship achieve their qualification. Most learners and apprentices who complete their course progress to positive destinations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Use information about the prior knowledge and skills that learners with high needs have, to plan learning and accurately assess the progress they make.
- Provide effective specialist SEND support, including speech and language therapy, for learners with high needs.
- Set targets for learners and apprentices that are specific and clear about how they can improve their knowledge or skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130649
Address	Kings Road Devonport Plymouth Devon PL1 5QG
Contact number	01752 305 300
Website	cityplym.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jackie Grubb
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2012
Main subcontractors	Plymouth Argyle Football in the Community Trust Achievement Training Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive of curriculum, quality and student experience, 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

Cliff Shaw, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sharon Dowling	His Majesty's Inspector
Matt Hann	His Majesty's Inspector
Pino Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Hannah Staddon	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Esther Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Squire	Ofsted Inspector
Lowenna Bradley	His Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Crombie	His Majesty's Inspector
Grace Watkins	Ofsted Inspector
Paul James	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Battersby	His 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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