

Inspection of Truro and Penwith College

Inspection dates: 3 to 6 December 2024

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

Information about this provider

Truro and Penwith College is a large, further education provider in Cornwall. The college has three main campuses in Truro, Penzance and Bodmin. The Truro and Penzance campuses offer a wide range of courses, including A levels, T levels and vocational courses. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Health Skills Centre in Bodmin offers specialised courses in health and manufacturing. The small Tregye campus on the outskirts of Truro offers specialist provision for students with high needs, level 4 foundation art courses and leadership and management courses.

At the time of inspection, the college had around 4900 students studying on education programmes for young people. A large proportion of students were studying at level 3, with an almost even number studying on A levels and vocational courses. A-level subjects with the largest numbers included science and mathematics. Creative subjects such as performing arts, music and art and design make up the largest numbers on vocational courses. One hundred and forty-eight students were studying on T-level courses, including education and childcare, design, survey and planning and health.

There were approximately 700 apprentices studying across 40 different apprenticeships. Most apprentices study at level 2 or level 3. The largest numbers were in construction, hospitality and nursing and allied health.

Around 800 adult students were studying on courses, including access to higher education, Skills Bootcamps and tailored learning.

The college had 189 students with high needs. Of these, 82 were studying on academic and vocational courses. One-hundred-and-seven students were studying across three specialist pathways, preparation for adulthood for students with complex needs, preparation for employment and preparation for independence and employment. Students with complex needs study at the Truro and Tregye campuses.

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

Students on education programmes for young people are taught ambitious curriculums that equip them very well with the skills, knowledge, and resilience needed for their next steps. Teachers skilfully design lessons that build knowledge incrementally and challenge students to apply their learning very effectively. For example, biology students use foundational concepts to tackle complex topics, such as medical diagnostics, preparing them for competitive university placements. Students also grow rapidly in resilience by taking part in high-quality enrichment activities, such as sports academies and creative arts exhibitions. They value their teaching highly and develop confidence, teamwork and leadership skills, preparing them for further study or employment.

Apprentices thrive in very effective training closely aligned with industry needs, supported by strong collaboration between staff and employers. Teachers plan well-sequenced curriculums that ensure apprentices quickly develop valuable skills and knowledge that they can apply to their workplace. Leaders also provide excellent opportunities for apprentices to work alongside visiting industry experts. This supports apprentices' development of technical competence while fostering confidence and professionalism. Apprentices recognise the value of their training and grow in ambition and pride.

Adult students develop valuable new skills and knowledge on courses which align well with employers' skills needs. Leaders collaborate with employers to provide courses, such as health and leadership Skills Bootcamps, which address local shortages and provide adults with valuable new knowledge. These programmes enable students to overcome barriers to employment, helping them develop resilience and self-belief to progress in their careers.

Students with high needs on vocational and academic programmes value the effective support they receive, helping them build confidence and resilience. Teachers adapt resources and personalise learning to individual needs. For example, creative arts students with high needs receive high-quality personalised feedback that specifically addresses their individual learning plans, ensuring that their progress is closely monitored and supported. As a result, most of these students achieve outcomes broadly in line with their peers, developing independence and confidence that prepare them for further study or employment. However, students with high needs on progression pathway programmes do not always receive the same high levels of support or personalised learning to meet their individual needs.

Across all provision types, students and apprentices feel valued and safe. They appreciate the respectful and inclusive culture that staff promote. They particularly value the personalised careers advice that helps them identify clear progression pathways into further training, apprenticeships or employment.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a deep understanding of Cornwall's economic and skills landscape and engage exceptionally well with key stakeholders, such as Cornwall Council, the Cornwall Economic Forum, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce. They develop curriculums that address both current skill shortages in sectors, such as hospitality, tourism and nursing, as well as emerging job opportunities in fields, including renewable energy and critical minerals. By making excellent use of labour market intelligence, leaders ensure the curriculum is aligned with local economic trends, job vacancies and demographic shifts, allowing them to anticipate and address the needs of the region.

Leaders collaborate with employers and stakeholders to help shape training across the provision, which is tailored to meet skills needs. They have forged strong partnerships with employers to address specialist skills shortages and provide targeted training. For example, they worked closely with a solar panel installation company to train technicians, directly contributing to Cornwall's renewable energy goals. Leaders have also partnered with the Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust, Cornwall Foundation Trust and Greenwich University to deliver a registered nurse apprenticeship programme, much of which is co-taught by medical and healthcare professionals. This collaboration has strengthened the recruitment pipeline for the trust and enhanced the skills of teaching staff, ensuring a high-quality training experience.

Leaders have made significant investments in new and emerging technologies to support workforce development. The Bodmin STEM and Health Skills Centre in particular, has transformed the local training offer by providing cutting-edge resources, such as health simulation suites and programmable nursing mannequins. These resources, alongside career pathways into medical, health, engineering and digital sectors, provide the local community with valuable opportunities to gain the skills required for today's job market.

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

Leaders have cultivated a culture of excellence that drives exceptional teaching and training for young people and apprentices. A very high proportion of young people and apprentices complete their qualifications. Many achieve the highest grades and produce work of exceptional quality. Adult students gain valuable new knowledge and practical skills. Most adult students achieve their qualifications and move on to further training or employment.

Teachers of students with high needs on progression pathway programmes do not always set ambitious goals for students or plan lessons to meet individual student's needs well enough. Teachers do not use effective teaching strategies or provide the support that students need to make good progress towards their specific goals or

qualifications. Too often, teachers fail to build on students' prior knowledge, making it difficult for students to learn or apply new concepts. They do not always challenge students sufficiently, which limits their academic and personal development. Leaders have recently introduced new systems and processes for planning learning and the recording and monitoring of students' progress towards specific targets and qualifications. However, it is too early to measure the impact of these actions.

Governors help to maintain high expectations for staff and students, ensuring these aspirations are embedded throughout the organisation. They have a wide range of valuable expertise, which they use well to support senior leaders. For example, leaders have appointed a governor with responsibility for high needs to support leaders and managers to improve the quality of the high needs provision and hold managers to account for their actions. Governors provide effective oversight of quality assurance processes with a focus on continuous improvements in teaching and student and apprentice outcomes.

Teachers on education programmes for young people employ a variety of highly effective teaching strategies to help students retain knowledge and apply learning in practical contexts. They use techniques, such as group discussions, peer teaching and problem-solving exercises with skill, ensuring students stay engaged and deepen their understanding. In A-level biology, for example, teachers incorporate case studies and real-life applications to encourage students' critical thinking, enhancing their ability to transfer knowledge from theory into practice. Teachers of T levels use problem-based learning very effectively. They present students with complex, real-world problems to research, collaborate on, and solve. For example, students on the T-level in design, surveying and planning, design a building layout while considering factors like safety, sustainability and cost efficiency. This contributes to students becoming highly accomplished at critical thinking, problem-solving and the application of theoretical knowledge in practical, industry-specific situations.

Teachers of apprenticeships work exceptionally well with employers to provide apprentices with very high-quality training and reviews. They help employers to identify valuable opportunities for apprentices to practise their skills in workplace settings, helping apprentices develop both technical expertise and professional behaviours, preparing them well for their careers.

Most teachers plan teaching and training that is skilfully sequenced to build students' and apprentices' knowledge incrementally, deepening their knowledge effectively over time. For example, teachers of level 3 creative arts ensure students understand important foundational skills in drawing and colour theory, before progressing to more complex topics, like graphic design. In adult provision, teachers of health and leadership Skills Bootcamps blend theoretical knowledge with practical application, ensuring students can apply new skills immediately in the workplace. However, in a few instances, teachers of adult students do not plan learning that is sufficiently personalised or demanding. This contributes to a few adults not making the progress expected of them or successfully completing their training.

Teachers use assessments adeptly to monitor students' and apprentices' progress and to plan further teaching and training. For example, in hospitality, teachers use practical assessments to observe students' abilities in workplace scenarios, providing immediate feedback that helps them to refine their skills. In level 3 business administrator apprenticeships, teachers use highly effective quizzes, essays and presentations to assess theoretical knowledge and provide targeted feedback. These assessments help teachers to identify areas where students and apprentices struggle and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. This contributes to students on education programmes for young people and apprentices making exceptional progress and rapidly developing significant new knowledge and skills.

Managers and teachers set very high standards for behaviour, creating an environment where students and apprentices consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to their studies. Teachers provide personalised guidance and feedback that fosters resilience and independence. They encourage students and apprentices to embrace challenges and take ownership of their learning by setting individual, challenging goals. This supports students and apprentices to take pride in their learning, showing high levels of determination to succeed. Students' and apprentices' attendance rates are high, with most arriving punctually.

Staff reinforce students' exceptional behaviours through very high-quality enrichment opportunities, such as creative exhibitions, which also promote confidence and perseverance. Staff are highly effective at supporting students with their personal development, ensuring they grow in resilience, and independence. They encourage students to take on new challenges, fostering a culture of growth and self-reflection that supports their overall development. Staff arrange valuable and well-attended enrichment activities, including volunteering and extracurricular clubs, which help students build teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills.

Specialist staff provide personalised careers advice to students and apprentices, ensuring they are well informed about progression opportunities. They work well with students to identify clear pathways into further training, apprenticeships or employment based on individual aspirations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Plan and teach an ambitious curriculum that meets the individual learning and support needs of students on progression pathways programmes.

- Plan and teach lessons that are suitably demanding for adult students that build on their existing knowledge and skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130629
Address	College Road Truro Cornwall TR1 3XX
Contact number	01872267000
Website	www.truro-penwith.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Martin Tucker
Provider type	General Further Education College
Date of previous inspection	23 to 26 February 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of 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 students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Paul James, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bev Ramsell	His Majesty's Inspector
Esther Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Rowley	Ofsted Inspector
Nikki Sendell	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Lacey	Ofsted Inspector
Saul Pope	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Battersby	His Majesty's Inspector
Nirosha Holton	Ofsted Inspector
Fern Jest	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Cliff Shaw	His Majesty's Inspector
Matt Hann	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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