

Inspection of Chichester College Group

Inspection dates: 10 to 14 February 2025

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

Information about this provider

Chichester College Group is a very large college group providing education and training across West Sussex, Brighton and Hove and other surrounding counties. Since the previous full inspection, Haywards Heath College was reopened in September 2020 as part of the college group and the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College Group merged with the group in August 2022. The group now comprises the following colleges: Brinsbury College, Chichester College, Crawley College, Haywards Heath College, Brighton Metropolitan College, Worthing College and Northbrook College. Brinsbury College is a specialist land-based college.

At the time of the inspection, there were 11,281 learners on education programmes for young people at levels 1 to 3, including T-level courses in subjects such as childcare and education, adult nursing, and media, broadcasting and production. There were 3,852 adult learners on courses such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and electrical installations learners. There were 2,481 apprentices studying apprenticeships from level 2 to level 7. There were 250 learners with high needs.

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

Learners and apprentices value the welcoming culture at the colleges that leaders and staff create. Most learners demonstrate the behaviour and attitudes which leaders expect. They benefit from teachers who are knowledgeable and experienced in their subjects and use their knowledge effectively to bring their subjects alive. As such, learners are highly motivated and participate successfully in their studies.

Learners and apprentices develop their academic and technical abilities to a good, and sometimes very high, standard. Hospitality learners create their own French cuisine tasting menus with a host of cooking and preparation techniques. A-level textile students produce creative designs such as handbags, collages and landscapes that they are proud to showcase through exhibitions of their art. Learners and apprentices produce work to a high standard and are proud of the finished products they create. Most young learners achieve well, and a significant minority achieve high grades. However, A-level achievement rates have seen a declining trend over the previous few years.

Adult learners benefit highly from excellent training that helps them to succeed and transforms their lives. The education and training that adult learners receive has a profound impact on their personal and professional development. Adult learners develop substantial knowledge and skills that they use to become more employable, to enter further or higher education, or to become better integrated into their communities. Adult learners make outstanding progress in their learning.

Apprentices enjoy high-quality training that helps them develop up-to-date knowledge and skills that prepare them well for careers in their chosen sectors. Horticultural apprentices develop a comprehensive understanding of the different characteristics of plants, which has informed their decisions about where and when to plant certain species. Apprentices develop the essential skills and positive professional behaviours that their employers highly value. Apprentices perform exceptionally well at work. They achieve extremely well in their final assessments and often gain promotion as a result of their studies.

Learners with high needs enjoy the college group's inclusive culture. Staff demonstrate high levels of empathy and understand their learners and their individual needs. However, at times, learners do not benefit from teaching or activities that are sufficiently challenging or provide opportunities for them to produce work to the standard of which they are capable. Learners become increasingly independent and confident. Those on vocational and A-level courses achieve in line with their peers because of the good support which staff provide.

Most learners attend well across most courses and participate positively in lessons and workshops. Where attendance is lower, teachers provide targeted support to help learners stay on track. While staff and leaders are making progress on improving attendance at GCSE English and mathematics classes, it remains low, particularly at the Chichester, Brighton and Northbrook colleges.

Learners benefit from the positive relationships which leaders develop in their local communities. Health and social care students discuss life experiences with people from the Rotary Club as part of the Bridging Generations project to bring people from different generations in contact with each other. Adults studying ESOL take part in sporting and community activities provided by a charity that supports refugees and asylum seekers. Learners are supported with a range of relevant opportunities to interact with the local population and contribute positively to the lives of others.

Learners and apprentices become confident in their capabilities as a result of their learning. Adult learners studying ESOL highly value their new independence, now able to make doctor's appointments, read letters from the bank and complete forms. Learners with complex needs develop good social and employability skills through projects such as running a community garden at Chichester College. Learners in vocational areas enjoy practising new skills, such as experimenting with subtraction cutting when producing a garment in creative practice, until they become proficient in their use.

Learners and apprentices learn how to keep themselves and others safe. Associate ambulance practitioner apprentices have the knowledge required to keep themselves and their patients safe in often highly volatile and challenging circumstances. Those studying to become teaching assistants learn about safeguarding early on, so they fully appreciate how to keep those they support safe. Learners and apprentices have a very secure understanding of safe working practices. They follow safety instructions and protocols in workshops and practical learning environments closely.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have an exceptional understanding of the skills landscape for the regions they serve. They collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders very effectively. They work very closely with a range of civic stakeholders, community organisations and employers, including Greater Brighton Economic Board, the Chamber of Commerce and Roche International. College leaders play a prominent role in the Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology. They have established skills advisory panels to gain insight into stakeholders' skills challenges and develop the curriculum in response.

Leaders are highly successful at aligning the curriculum with skills priorities in the region. NHS staff work with leaders to introduce new apprenticeships and T-level provision to train individuals to meet the recruitment demands in dental nursing. Leaders work with Manor Royal Business Improvement District to understand the skills needs of employers in the area and to offer courses in customer service and digital skills as a result.

Managers seek input from stakeholders to design their curriculum with significant success. For example, leaders and managers at Brinsbury College work with West Sussex County Council and employers on the Growing Sussex project to develop the use of advanced technology in horticulture. Staff work closely with Crawley Borough

Council to respond to the emerging green skills training needs. Leaders have recently introduced a teaching space at Crawley College to train people on how to install a range of green retrofit features in houses.

Leaders and staff engage with and use the expertise of employers very effectively to enhance learners' and apprentices' experiences. Chefs teach master classes, so learners and apprentices learn how to make dishes to an employer-specific standard and expectation. Learners studying A levels attend Parliament and learn about people management and campaigning while working in the office of their local Member of Parliament. Learners and apprentices develop the skills they need to achieve their career ambitions.

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

Leaders and staff are committed to ensuring apprentices and learners achieve their qualifications and develop the skills and behaviours necessary. They have designed a broad curriculum accessible to learners with diverse starting points, facilitating progression in education and training. Most learners and apprentices achieve well and make positive next steps on completion of their courses.

The college group boasts exceptional resources. This includes a working farm and farm teaching centre at Brinsbury, immersive technology spaces in all colleges and a vast range of performance, creative and music studios at Northbrook. Teachers make use of these industry-standard environments very effectively to enhance learners' preparation for further study or employment.

Staff have a strong understanding of learners' needs and provide tailored support. They make sure learners progress confidently towards their individual outcomes and develop their ability to self-advocate and to become independent. Specialist therapeutic staff, including those for speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, support learners effectively in these activities. Learning support assistants in multi-trade classes at Brighton provide additional support around the use of hand tools so learners can make effective use of tools such as paint brushes to develop their painting and decorating skills. Teaching staff and learning support assistants collaborate well to assist learners with additional needs, so that they make good progress.

The quality of education is good, and outstanding for adult and apprenticeship provision. Staff plan and sequence the curriculum effectively across most areas, which enables learners to build knowledge and skills progressively. In most instances, teachers clearly explain new concepts and model specialist language effectively. Applied law teachers at Haywards Heath College provide clear explanations for specialist terms such as 'corporate manslaughter' so that learners have a thorough understanding of how and when to use official language. Apprentices and learners develop a secure understanding of important terminology, which most use accurately and appropriately.

In most instances, staff provide useful feedback that informs apprentices and learners of what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Young learners studying ESOL improve their writing, spelling and grammar following feedback on their written work. Staff provide clear feedback on learners' work so they understand how to improve the structure and content of their answers to maximise the score they can achieve in their tests. Where it is highly effective, teachers provide feedback that is clear, and learners improve their grades and standard of work as a consequence.

Staff mostly use assessment carefully to check understanding and plan future learning. In lessons, most teachers use effective questioning to draw out complex responses and deepen learners' knowledge. In hospitality, teachers skilfully tease out more complex responses from learners, once they have given their initial responses. Where they may identify misconceptions, most teachers intervene with clear and corrective feedback. Teachers are particularly adept at using assessment to track learners' and apprentices' progress and help them prepare for their final assessments or examinations.

Staff provide most learners with a broad range of high-quality events, services and specialist advice on their career ambitions. Learners understand the opportunities available in different industries that interest them by attending talks by industry professionals who share their experiences of their sectors. For example, cabin crew from a large airline company visit Worthing College to talk to travel and tourism learners about the positives and challenges of their jobs and industries. Staff arrange careers events across the college group where they invite employers, universities and apprenticeship training providers to talk to learners about future opportunities. Learners, such as those in T-level digital production, visit universities to learn about courses and life as an undergraduate. Learners receive the help they need to be aware of and ready to access the opportunities open to them on completion of their training.

Through a comprehensive tutorial programme, young learners explore a range of purposeful topics related to life in modern Britain and to their personal development. However, learners too often do not have a comprehensive enough understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremist views. As a result, too few understand how to identify or respond to these risks.

Leaders have shown substantial commitment to improving education and training in the area through merging with and seeking to improve the quality of less successful colleges in the region. There have been notable areas of success, such as in the apprenticeship curriculum. Leaders and managers have been quick to redesign the curriculum in conjunction with employers, increasing staffing resources and ensuring apprentices benefit from the wider support systems available within the college group. Apprenticeship outcomes are very positive and the number of apprentices who are passed their end date continues to reduce.

Leaders recognise that too many learners do not make good enough progress from their starting points in English and mathematics GCSEs. They have implemented a

strategy to improve GCSE achievement rates. Leaders aim for students to achieve one grade higher than their qualifications on entry. However, many learners do not meet this ambition, most notably at Northbrook College.

Leaders, managers and governors have a clear vision for the college group. They make sure that each college, while sharing the common goals and values of the group, maintains its own unique identity in terms of its curriculum offer and how it serves the community in which it sits.

Governors have a wealth of experience and expertise across business, education and finance that they bring to bear to support and challenge college leaders. Executive summaries received from senior leaders inform them in detail of the main aspects of the college group. Governors take a keen interest in the life of the college group and make valuable contributions to, for example, self-assessment validation and learning walks. They have strong oversight of the college group and its leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve students' attendance, particularly in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Improve the proportion of students who make positive progress from their starting points in GCSE English and mathematics, and who achieve A-level qualifications.
- Ensure young learners know how to keep themselves safe from the risk of radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 130843 |
| Address | Westgate Fields Chichester West Sussex PO19 1SB |
| Contact number | 01243 786321 |
| Website | www.chichester.ac.uk |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Andrew Green |
| Provider type | General further education college |
| Date of previous inspection | 3 to 6 March 2020 |
| Main subcontractors | None |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, 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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