

Short inspection of City College Plymouth

Inspection dates:

11–12 March 2020

Outcome

City College Plymouth continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

City College Plymouth is a large general further education college. It is the largest provider of education and training for young people in Plymouth, with over 2,700 learners between 16 and 18 years old. The college also has over 1,100 apprentices based in the local area. Nearly half of these are between 16 and 18 years old. Around half of all apprentices are on apprenticeships in engineering. In 2019/20, over 3,000 adult learners have followed courses, mainly in access to higher education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English and mathematics. Over 150 learners with high needs attend the college. This number has increased significantly in recent years.

The college works with three subcontractors in the local area. The largest of these is Achievement Training, which is owned by City College Plymouth. This provides education, training and apprenticeships for adults and young people.

At the previous short inspection in March 2016, the college was graded good.

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

Learners feel safe because staff care for them and provide them with effective support when they need it. Staff understand the personal circumstances their learners face. They use effective links with external agencies to support learners well.

Learners work hard and most achieve their potential because staff use their extensive knowledge and experience to make the courses highly relevant to the careers their learners want to pursue. For example, painting and decorating trainers draw on their extensive commercial experience when teaching. This motivates apprentices who progress well because they understand the link between the knowledge they are taught and its application in the workplace.

Learners gain an insight into the industries they want to move into because teachers and leaders have built excellent relationships with local employers. This ensures the content of courses reflects current practice. For example, in hospitality, the content

of the curriculum reflects current trends in local pub menus and street food. Learners in sport receive more training on coaching because of the increase in jobs for fitness trainers.

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

Teachers design courses that are highly relevant to the jobs, careers and education to which learners aspire. Teachers carefully consider the order in which topics are taught to ensure learners build their knowledge over time. They provide learners with work that is increasingly demanding. Teachers of vocational courses use trial and error, conversation and real-world problem-solving approaches that enable learners to remember more over time. This ensures learners improve their theoretical knowledge and have the practical opportunities they need to become fluent at applying this knowledge. As a result, learners are well prepared for their examinations and final assessments, and most are successful in these. Many meet their aspirations and progress on to the jobs or careers of their choice.

Teachers ensure that courses meet the specific needs of local employers. ESOL learners improve their chances of employment in the hospitality industry because some of their English teaching builds on their interest in food. The curriculums for electrical courses are designed with the help of local marine engineering companies. Consequently, learners develop new and additional knowledge bespoke to the local context and their own needs.

Leaders help teachers to teach well by providing useful training and encouraging teachers to be innovative. This is evident in mathematics courses where teachers skilfully check that learners remember information they were taught earlier in the course by including regular assessments in lessons. Mathematics teachers have also experimented with taking learners out of the classroom to study angles, dimensions and areas in the sports hall. These memorable practical activities help learners to grasp important mathematical concepts.

Learners gain a thorough understanding of the jobs and further education they could move on to as a result of teachers' knowledge of their industries and their effective links with employers and external organisations and the college's effective careers service. For example, staff carefully select placements for learners with high needs that suit the stage they have reached in their journey towards independence. Learners on the access to nursing course not only learn about different careers but are well prepared for these because universities and a local hospital have a say in what is taught on the course.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have maintained the college's strengths and dealt with the weaknesses inspectors had identified. Leaders' increased focus on engaging with employers, local business leaders, universities and the council has been a significant factor in the development of an ambitious curriculum and high-quality training. The large number of new college managers and governors have

brought new ideas that build on the good practice that previously existed. Governors and senior leaders have a clear strategy for the college that has been developed collaboratively with staff, learners and Plymouth's communities.

Leaders are improving the college by placing the well-being of staff and students at the heart of the college's culture. Many staff feel that managers are taking effective steps to manage their team's workload. Training gives staff the skills and knowledge they need to support their learners. Leaders act on staff suggestions to improve their time at work. For example, they have acted on staff requests for a well-being garden, restrictions on meetings, a breast-feeding room and menopause groups.

A few teachers do not give learners useful feedback when assessing their work. In these instances, feedback tells learners whether they have met the criteria set by an awarding organisation, but not how well they have understood something or what they need to do to improve. In some subjects, such as business, the curriculum does not include enough assessment of the skills and behaviours a learner will need when they get a job. Consequently, their achievement falters.

The curriculum taught to some learners has been interrupted. Too many have had aspects of their course disrupted by staff changes or staff absences. Leaders have not yet stopped staff absences having an impact on learners.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure staff are trained on current issues facing their learners and recent changes to legislation. They have trained a large number of tutors to act as points of contact for safeguarding in different parts of the college. Learners feel these tutors are approachable, so they are happy to use them to get help with problems. When learners raise a concern, staff deal with it quickly and well.

Regular posters and video campaigns keep learners up to date with matters relating to safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism, but too many learners have not learned about these topics in enough detail in their lessons and tutorials.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Increase further the progress that all learners make towards achieving their curriculum goals by ensuring fewer courses are disrupted by a lack of teachers.
- Ensure that all teachers provide feedback to learners that helps them to improve their work and to know whether they have developed the skills and behaviours they need for their chosen industry.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130649
Address	Kings Road Devonport Plymouth Devon PL1 5QG
Contact number	01752 305300
Website	https://www.cityplym.ac.uk/
Principal	Jackie Grubb
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2016
Main subcontractors	Achievement Training Plymouth Argyle football club Babcock Marine Development Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since City College Plymouth was judged to be good in October 2012.

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, 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 observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Ofsted is aware of the challenges that Covid-19 is currently posing to those we inspect. During this visit, the inspectors took into consideration the impact of any measures being taken to slow the spread of Coronavirus by the college. This has included the effect these measures have had on the current attendance of the learners, apprentices, staff and staffing arrangements.

Inspection team

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