

Inspection of Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education

Inspection dates: 22 to 25 October 2024

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	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Norwich City College is a large general further education college serving Norfolk. There are campuses in Norwich and North Walsham, known as Paston College, along with a land-based college at Easton. Learners and apprentices study and train in a very broad range of technical, academic and vocational subjects and apprenticeship standards. More than half of learners and apprentices study at level 2 or below. Leaders offer T-level courses at all three campuses.

At the time of inspection, there were just under 6,200 learners aged 16 to 18 years old, around 1,100 learners were on adult learning programmes and there were around 1,000 apprentices. There were 597 learners with high needs and around 150 care-experienced learners.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy their education and training. They are positive about learning and most work enthusiastically in theory lessons and during practical activities. Most learners and apprentices attend well and are punctual, demonstrating the qualities employers and their teachers expect. They care for one another and value what others have to say, which helps them be ready for life and work.

Learners and apprentices benefit from learning and activities that promote personal development. In most tutorials, young people discuss current affairs, the benefits and risks of social media and the importance of good mental health and well-being. In a small number of tutorials, staff do not enable learners to discuss their ideas deeply enough. Learners and apprentices understand the risk posed by extremist views and benefit from learning about the values that make Britain an inclusive society. Learners and apprentices are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Learners gain from a variety of activities that deepen their understanding of their chosen subject. In uniformed public services, learners take part in team-building exercises with the Army and RAF. Learners studying law visit courts and learn about the Crown Prosecution Service. Learners who take part in activities beyond the curriculum widen their interests and deepen their talents. They enjoy a range of sporting activities at the Easton campus. They contribute willingly to improving the college experience through the student union and groups, such as the LGBTQ+ and disabilities societies. A small proportion of learners are unable to take part in these activities because of poor transport infrastructure between campuses. Learners develop knowledge of their subjects, expand their horizons and build their confidence well.

Adult learners, often with disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances, value highly the wide range of opportunities to learn the skills they need to work and settle. They enjoy the communities at the college, make new friends and improve their well-being. They learn the skills and knowledge they need to secure jobs in the region. However, many adult learners in English for speakers of other languages are resettled out of the region at short notice and, consequently, do not complete their studies as planned.

Apprentices securely and quickly acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their jobs. Most benefit from regular and frequent reviews with their trainer and employer to plan the training they will do. But many apprentices have not made sufficiently rapid progress to complete their training in the time planned. Most apprentices who finish their training achieve well and secure employment or promotion.

Learners with high needs are confident, independent and cope well in different situations. They benefit highly from the well-coordinated and specialist support that expert and experienced staff provide. Learners make rapid progress against the sharply focused targets staff set. Though learners develop the literacy and numeracy

skills they need for employment and everyday life, too few achieve English and mathematics qualifications. Learners benefit greatly from enterprise projects and learn the skills and behaviours they need for work. Learners with high needs are prepared well for their next steps and often progress to employment, internships, further training and education.

Learners and apprentices value highly the welcoming and inclusive environment they experience at all college campuses. They understand the importance of wearing identification badges and are reassured by staff, who challenge the small number of learners not wearing identification badges. Learners and apprentices know how to report any concerns they have and are confident that staff will deal with these quickly and sensitively. Learners and apprentices build trusting relationships with staff and they feel safe.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the employment priorities set by the local skills improvement partnership and articulated in the Norfolk economic plan. They align the courses the college offers closely with these priorities. But employers and stakeholders are not involved consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.

Leaders and managers use their close links with partners, such as the Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association and the NHS, effectively to offer education and training to learners and apprentices so they have the skills and knowledge they need. Managers collaborate effectively with key employers and stakeholders to provide industry-standard training facilities in, for example, the digital, sustainable construction and low-carbon sectors. Managers work effectively with Norfolk County Council to provide opportunities for disadvantaged adults and young people to improve their skills and employment prospects. Managers use their mature relationships with schools, colleges and universities to make sure that learners and apprentices have a pathway of education and training for the careers they aspire to.

Leaders and managers have not made sure that employers and stakeholders are involved in the planning and teaching of all areas of the curriculum so that learners can benefit consistently well from up-to-date training and skills development. In areas of the curriculum where employer and stakeholder relationships are mature, learners and apprentices learn up-to-date skills for their industries. For example, learners studying T-levels learn about safety when working on hybrid vehicles. Level 3 civil engineering technician apprentices learn about sustainable transport and inclusive design of public spaces.

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

Leaders prioritise social mobility and inclusivity in their design of curriculums, reflecting the highly complex challenges and opportunities in the region. For example, they offer A-level programmes to learners whose choices are limited because of public transport and selective provision. Leaders offer programmes such as 'Step into college' to better support vulnerable young people, in response to the loss of provision in the region. Because of such leadership strategies, learners and apprentices have broad and varied opportunities to learn and train.

Leaders and managers have a clear and well-intentioned strategy to offer opportunities to learners who have not achieved well in their previous education settings. This means that a few learners take a little longer to develop strong study habits. As a result, learners' achievements in a few courses are lower than in similar providers nationally.

Leaders and teachers plan and sequence most courses sensibly and effectively. Learners develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours to an appropriate and sometimes better standard. Learners with high needs develop the skills they need for life quickly and often achieve better than their peers. Apprentices improve in their jobs and a high proportion of those completing their training are promoted or given additional responsibilities. Though a significant minority of learners leave courses early, often due to circumstances beyond their control, most move on to further learning or employment.

In most lessons and training sessions, teachers use effective teaching strategies to make lessons interesting, so learners and apprentices acquire new knowledge. In level 2 animal care, learners check vivariums to make sure snakes' habitats are healthy and safe. Most teachers explain concepts well and correct learners' and apprentices' misunderstandings quickly. In A-level law, learners analyse case studies correctly by considering thought processes rather than motives. Most teachers revisit concepts so learners and apprentices practise and become fluent in what they have learned. Apprentices training for the level 5 assistant practitioner apply their knowledge of life transitions to the development of service users' personalities. As a result of lessons and training, learners and apprentices know more and can do more.

Teachers do not provide learners and apprentices with consistently high-quality feedback. When they do, learners know how well they are doing and improve their work quickly. Too few apprentices benefit from frequent and regular reviews to check their progress and plan their learning. Leaders have acted quickly to improve apprentices' experience, however, too few apprentices complete their training in the time planned.

Leaders and managers provide exceptionally well-constructed, individually tailored programmes of study for learners with high needs. These support learners with high needs to make outstanding progress from their starting points. Staff make sure that

specialist support is coordinated very effectively and that learners have the assistive technology they need to overcome barriers to learning. Learners develop a wide range of personal, social and work skills rapidly. For example, learners make celebration cakes to order and provide a café service at a community centre. Learners improve their literacy and numeracy skills when working with curators at a local visual arts training centre. Learners are confident, independent and prepared very well for adulthood.

Learning support assistants and job coaches are attuned closely to the support needs of their learners. Teachers know their learners well and use highly effective and individualised strategies so learners make rapid progress towards their goals. For example, teachers plan enterprise projects carefully so that learners develop quickly the skills and qualities employers say they need. A high proportion of learners with high needs progress to further learning and employment.

Leaders and managers have chosen a range of T-level courses carefully in response to the employment and skills needs of the region. Teachers use their expertise well to make sure that learners acquire up-to-date knowledge they can use in their work placements. For example, T-level childcare and education learners learn to build water walls using recycled materials as part of their forest school training. On their work placements, learners grow in confidence, use their initiative well and contribute positively to their teams. Learners are well prepared for employment in their chosen sector.

Leaders and staff make sure that learners and apprentices benefit from effective careers advice and guidance. Learners and apprentices appreciate the careers and apprenticeship fairs, guest speakers and advice provided by careers specialists. Young learners benefit from purposeful work experience and thoughtfully designed projects that staff organise. They become more confident and develop leadership and communication skills as a result of their involvement. Learners and apprentices are equipped with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Leaders and governors are ambitious for learners, including those who are disadvantaged. Governors support leaders to establish the college as a safe sanctuary for asylum seekers and to lead education as a centre of excellence for those with additional needs. Governors challenge leaders rigorously to make sure the experience for learners and apprentices continually improves. Leaders and governors are focused keenly on the recruitment of high-quality staff. Leaders have strengthened the management of curriculum, providing new managers with training to sharpen their oversight of performance and teaching. It is too early to judge the full impact of the work of these managers on the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure that teachers provide learners and apprentices with high-quality feedback so they can improve their work.
- Make sure that apprentices have regular and frequent reviews so that employers and staff can plan their training effectively and apprentices can complete their training in the time expected.
- Make sure that learners can discuss personal development themes in their tutorials.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130764
Address	Ipswich Road Norwich Norfolk NR2 2LJ
Contact number	01603773311
Website	www.ccn.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jerry White
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	5 to 8 October 2021
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Vice 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 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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