

Inspection of City of Bristol College

Inspection dates: 12–15 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

City of Bristol College is a large college with four substantial campuses across Bristol. These are based in the city centre, the north and the south of the city. In 2018/19 approximately 2,900 students from 16 to 18 years of age were following study programmes. Just under 4,000 adults were following full- or part-time courses ranging from entry level to level 4. The college has 1,066 apprentices, the largest number of whom are following programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies and business, administration and law. Around 2,800 students, mostly adult learners or apprentices, are enrolled with subcontractors. Four hundred and sixty-seven students were studying professional and vocational higher education programmes in the University Centre.

City of Bristol College delivers 79% of all learning aims in Bristol. Just over a third of the college's students are following programmes preparing them for life and work. The proportion of unemployed adults in 2018/19 is close to the national rate. Qualification levels in Bristol are high, with nearly half of the adult population in Bristol educated to NVQ level 4 and above, compared to 39% nationally. In 2017/18, 62% of key stage 4 pupils gained a GCSE at grade 4 or above in both English and

mathematics compared to 64% nationally. In 2017/18, the attainment of 19-year-olds in English and mathematics at key stage 5 was 64% compared to 68% nationally.

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

Students feel the college is welcoming and inclusive. They say it is a place where people who have different beliefs, cultures and learning experiences can work together in a tolerant and respectful environment.

The learning of many young people and apprentices has been interrupted by changes to the curriculum and gaps in teaching staff. Most are optimistic that leaders are tackling these problems this year.

The majority of students and apprentices enjoy their time at the college. They are ambitious and well motivated to learn. They recognise how the skills and knowledge they are gaining will help them in the future.

The great majority of adult students learn new knowledge and skills that are valuable in their everyday lives and which further their career ambitions. Students with high needs on specialist programmes develop useful independent living and work skills. Apprentices and young people develop positive attitudes to work and learning. Most students and apprentices develop the knowledge and skills at least to the levels expected. However, how well they do this is dependent on the experience, knowledge and skills of individual tutors and not the result of consistently good teaching and a well-planned curriculum across all subjects. In a minority of cases, teachers are not supporting every learner to achieve their full potential.

Students studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and health and social care programmes have access to a good range of enrichment activities. These increase the depth of their understanding and knowledge. However, other students are not as well served. Too many students do not benefit from high-quality external work experience.

Students and apprentices feel safe at the college. However, too many do not yet have a good understanding of the dangers associated with extremist ideologies or how to keep themselves safe online.

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

Leaders and managers have secured the financial sustainability of the college and are continuing to improve the quality of its curriculum. They have prioritised their actions appropriately and tackled weaknesses in some curriculum areas well, such as in health and social care and GCSEs in English and mathematics. Leaders were realistic about the scale of the challenges they faced. Despite notable improvements in many areas, actions have not yet improved the quality of provision in enough subjects and courses to match the best at the college.

The quality of programmes for young people is too variable. In the stronger programme areas, such as creative and digital, the curriculum is responsive and well planned. Consequently, young students produce confident and creative work.

Teachers ensure that these students develop appropriate professional, industry-standard skills, for example in designing software for computer games. Conversely, on programmes such as business, the redevelopment of the curriculum has not been fast enough. Teachers and trainers do not always identify young students' and apprentices' existing skills, knowledge and behaviours well enough to plan effective learning. Consequently, they cannot measure accurately the extent to which these learners are developing their skills and knowledge. Teachers on level 1 vocational programmes are not routinely encouraging students to achieve to the best of their ability and progress onto higher levels of learning. Students' attendance on level 1 programmes is too often low, and there are pockets of poor attendance in other subjects. This limits students' ability to learn and move on to higher level programmes.

Teachers' feedback in the majority of programmes for young people is too vague and does not support students to develop their English or professional skills. For example, too many students studying on business level 2 programmes are struggling with their English and mathematics.

Leaders and managers work closely and effectively with a range of partners such as the combined local authority and employers. As a result, they are responding positively to meeting local and regional priorities and filling local skills gaps. They meet the needs of those who are most disadvantaged very well. Their approach is successful in fostering inclusion and providing Bristol residents with clear pathways to improved employment, greater independence or higher levels of education. For example, teachers ensure that refugees and asylum seekers on ESOL programmes are very well prepared for citizenship and employment in the area. This helps underpin Bristol's role as a 'City of Sanctuary'.

Most teachers of adult students are well qualified and use their subject expertise effectively. The curriculum is designed to meet industry and academic standards. Teachers on adult programmes plan and implement this curriculum effectively, which develops their students' skills well. Most have high expectations and use challenging learning activities which engage and interest students and give them clear feedback on their work. As a result, students learn and remember their new skills and knowledge well.

A lack of appropriate staffing in programmes such as A levels and construction apprenticeships has meant that students in these areas have fallen behind in their work. Some apprentices have had to complete a number of assignments very quickly in order to catch up. In addition, apprentice training staff do not always take sufficient account of employers' on-the-job training programmes so that they can plan apprentices' learning effectively. This slows the development of learners' skills, knowledge and understanding of work and their career prospects.

Most teachers and assessors are effective and receive useful professional training. They mark adult students' and apprentices' work well and give clear, constructive feedback. For example, assessors on level 4 business administration apprenticeships provide them with detailed information on how to achieve a higher grade. Teaching

staff provide effective practical support for students with high needs, including students working in the college salon on beauty programmes. These students also value teachers' guidance on correct spelling in their assignments. Learners with high needs on supported internships gain valuable employment skills through practising them at work rather than in the classroom. This leads to the majority gaining employment after their training. Students with high needs become more independent as well as developing their academic and vocational skills.

Students and apprentices are studious, behave well and are attentive in class. They speak openly about how they enjoy the respect they receive from college staff who treat them as adults. The college makes good use of community learning centres to introduce potential students to learning. Adult students highlight how they gain in confidence from working in such supportive environments.

Students and apprentices receive useful information, advice and guidance which is tailored to their different needs. For example, motor vehicle students attend car and motorbike shows and are encouraged to discuss their future plans with employers. Tutors provide effective individualised tutorial sessions. These allow students and apprentices the opportunity to talk through any issues which affect them, such as their career plans and any concerns, such as workplace bullying.

Leaders have ensured that students benefit from a good range of resources at the college. These include the industry-standard salon and state-of-the art facilities in travel and tourism and engineering. These enable students and apprentices to build their knowledge from regular hands-on use of industry-level facilities and equipment such as propeller and jet aircraft, and 3D printers. These students are being prepared well for the specialist careers they wish to pursue. However, in other areas the technology available is outdated or not used well, which slows the pace of learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate checks allowing them to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Leaders have effective links with local agencies which help provide support to students who may be at risk.

Safeguarding staff have up-to-date knowledge of local issues and have ensured that staff and student training includes information on knife crime and gang-related activities.

Leaders have a clear system for reporting and monitoring safeguarding-related issues. They report on safeguarding at every senior meeting and produce a quarterly report for governors. As a result, leaders and governors have a good understanding of the issues and know that they are being resolved.

Too many students and apprentices do not have a sufficient understanding of the risks of exposure to extremism and radicalisation and of their potential impact on their lives in their communities.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Although many areas of the curriculum have improved, leaders should ensure that the current variations in the quality of curriculum delivery and students' achievement continue to reduce for young people and apprentices.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that GCSE English and mathematics achievements have improved for young people and adults. However, too few young people and adults make good progress in or achieve their functional skills qualifications. Leaders and managers should ensure that all students have access to a high-quality English and mathematics curriculum.
- While leaders and managers have established a range of work-related learning opportunities, they should ensure that all young people can consolidate their knowledge and skills through high-quality external work experience that is planned at the start of their programmes.
- Leaders and managers have developed effective links with employers to meet the needs of their local economy. They now need to develop the curriculum further for specific apprenticeships and ensure that on- and off-the-job training is aligned carefully to maximise apprentices' progress and their acquisition of skills, knowledge and behaviours.
- Leaders and managers have been successful at improving students' attendance in most areas of the college. However, there are still pockets of poor attendance in a few subject areas which need to be improved.
- Leaders and managers are ambitious for students and apprentices to progress to higher level programmes. However, they still need to improve the proportion of vocational students moving onto higher level programmes.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131094
Address	St George's Road Bristol BS1 5UA
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Website	www.cityofbristol.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Andy Forbes
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	16–19 May 2017
Main subcontractors	Ashley Community & Housing Ltd Cabot Learning Federation Consultancy Management and Training Services Ltd The Education and Skills Partnership Ltd Hartcliffe and Withywood Ventures People Solutions Training (N-Gaged Training)

Information about this inspection

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

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