Inspection of City of Bristol College

Inspection dates: 17 to 20 January 2023

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

Information about this provider

City of Bristol College is a large further education college with four campuses across Bristol. At the time of the inspection, 3,113 students were enrolled on education programmes for young people (EPYP). The majority of these students followed programmes at entry level to level 2. A minority of students were on vocational and academic programmes at level 3. The largest subject areas were foundation learning, construction, crafts, and creative arts and design. There were over 5,000 adult students, mainly on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and English and mathematics programmes. There were 684 on apprenticeship programmes, with the most popular sector areas being construction, engineering, and business administration. The vast majority of apprentices were enrolled at levels 2 and 3, with the rest studying at levels 4 and 5. There were 706 students with high needs, of whom around half were on programmes specifically designed for students with high needs. In addition, the college works with five subcontractors, who deliver mostly adult and high needs programmes.

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

Most students and apprentices, including those students at subcontractor provision, interact well with their peers and with college staff. This is because of the effective teaching and social exchanges students and apprentices have with teachers and other staff. Staff and students collectively create a culture where students and apprentices can be themselves. As a result, students and apprentices are respectful and value the diverse and inclusive college population.

Most students and apprentices study in calm and welcoming environments. This is because they respond well to the high expectations teachers and college staff have of them. Students and apprentices behave well and are respectful of the wider college community.

Teachers and other college staff foster mutual trust and respect. Students and apprentices are keen to learn and are supportive of each other in their learning. As a result, students and apprentices display high levels of positive behaviours and are proud of their work. They enjoy their lessons and are motivated to engage in new experiences.

Students and apprentices feel safe at college and at work. They can talk confidently about the steps they would take to report any concerns. They appreciate the steps leaders and managers have taken to keep them safe at college. For example, leaders and managers have installed entrance barriers at all entrances and exits, and all staff, students, apprentices and visitors must wear visual identification.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers work effectively with employers and stakeholders to identify the current and future skills needs. They play an active role in local and regional skills and employer forums, such as the Western Training Provider Network, and are contributors to the local skills improvement plan strategy. Leaders are members of the West of England combined authority board. They are key partners in Bristol City Council's 'One City' strategy, which aims to meet the current and future skills needs of Bristol. They actively contribute to the reduction of worklessness through close work with Jobcentre Plus. Leaders and managers also work with large national employers, such as DAF Trucks Ltd, and with local small to medium enterprises to provide the skilled workforce they need. As a result, City of Bristol's college curriculum aligns well to local/regional skills priorities.

Leaders and managers involve a substantial number of employers in curriculum design and teaching across the college. Employers provide specialist input to ensure that the curriculum accurately reflects the industry. For example, employers provide careers talks and highlight the realities and expectations of the industry they work in. The supported internship programme for students with high needs has been co-

designed with employers and leaders for interns to be better prepared to apply for employment.

Employers contribute to the curriculum design of the vast majority of programmes. For example, the film studies curriculum has direct links with employers and industry specialists in the creative and media sectors found in Bristol. However, where employer involvement is less defined, such as in adult provision, there are few links to employers to support the development of vocational pathways. As a result, these students and apprentices do not always fully understand what the world of work looks like.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of how they contribute to meeting skills needs. They develop courses to meet the needs of specific groups, such as ESOL programmes for refugees and qualifications for security workers that lead directly to employment. Leaders are valued members of the civic and employer stakeholder groups. They also contribute to the strategic plans for developing green skills and net-zero initiatives and to increase the number of Bristol residents going on to study higher education.

The vast majority of curriculum areas, though not all, have effective links with employers and other stakeholders, who advise and assist in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. For those programmes where higher education is the intended destination, the curriculum content is developed with local higher education institutions, such the University of the West of England, based in Bristol. As a result, the curriculum content on these programmes is developed to ensure it emphasises the subjects contained within their undergraduate degrees.

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

Leaders and managers have developed a purposeful curriculum, with content being selected carefully to ensure that it meets current industry practice. Employers and stakeholders provide effective input. For example, aviation and cabin crew students have input from Jet2 and DHL that develops their knowledge of current industry practice and the professional behaviours needed in these industries. As a result, most students and apprentices develop the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their next steps into further/higher education or into the world of work.

Teachers plan their curriculum in a logical way. For example, for adult students on access to higher education social science courses, teachers deliver offender profiling in psychology and crime and deviance in sociology simultaneously. This provides students with a deeper understanding of the subject before moving on to the mental health module. For younger students on motor vehicle programmes, the initial focus is on the safe use of basic tools and equipment before moving on to more complicated activities, such as working on chassis, brakes and then suspension. Level 3 business administration apprentices develop skills to communicate effectively

with larger teams in order to coordinate projects, such as organising large-scale events. As a result, students and apprentices increase their knowledge and skills, and most of them become competent practitioners.

Teachers design and use activities to enable students on EPYP to develop their knowledge and skills. In uniformed public services, students complete short tests, which are like those used in the services selection processes, such as timed mathematics tests and verbal reasoning activities. A-level film studies students revisit films they have studied in year one in greater depth in their second year. This means they learn in depth about contrasting, diverse and intriguing filmmaking, which reflects a wide range of British and international historical, cultural and moral themes. As a result, most students can relate the new knowledge and skills gained to past learning.

Leaders and managers have designed a varied specialist curriculum for students with high needs. This curriculum has strong links to community groups and prepares students well for independence and employment. Teachers have developed appropriate curriculum content to focus on the targets of individuals. As a result, students receive effective teaching that enables them to make progress. Leaders and managers make sure that students with high needs on vocational and academic programmes are supported effectively. As a result, most students with high needs achieve at least as well as their peers.

Most teachers have extensive experience and subject knowledge. They are well informed about the subjects they teach. For example, in GCSE mathematics, teachers use their skills to develop useful resources, such as workbooks. Students use these well to help practise and deepen the knowledge they have learned in class. As a result, students and apprentices trust their teachers to help them develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they will need in the future.

Most teachers benefit from useful and relevant subject development. For example, trainers on the motor vehicle apprenticeship have attended programmes in servicing electric vehicles. This means they can teach students and apprentices the up-to-date vocational and technical skills that meet the latest industry requirements. As a result, students and apprentices benefit from knowledge and understanding that are beyond the specification of the curriculum.

Most teachers benefit from professional development that helps them to develop their teaching expertise. Most teachers participate in whole-college development days. Most teachers also participate in development activities in their own curriculum areas, and for those that do, this helps them to develop their teaching skills. However, specialist teachers of students with high needs do not get enough training to help vocational and academic teachers recognise and respond to students with high needs more effectively.

Most teachers give students and apprentices useful feedback about their performance. For example, apprentices on the site carpentry programme receive useful and developmental feedback. Students on animal care have improved their

standard of work because of teachers' feedback, and most are now on target to achieve a distinction grade.

Leaders and managers have developed effective apprenticeship programmes. Teachers deliver the topics apprentices need in order to be better in their jobs and pass their assessments. For example, on the light vehicle maintenance programme, apprentices learn about removing, replacing and understanding electrical components, before moving on to more complex components to complete expert diagnosis. In this way, apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be more effective employees at work.

Leaders and managers work with a range of community adult stakeholders. This helps to engage the most disadvantaged people in the community. For example, the extensive offer of adult employability programmes, including English and mathematics, helps adult students to develop the skills they need for everyday life and the workplace.

Governors have a good working knowledge of the college and are fully engaged in making improvements. They now receive more reliable performance data, and this helps them to ask pertinent questions to challenge leaders. However, because quality assurance processes do not focus sufficiently on the quality of education, governors do not understand the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning.

Leaders and managers make careful checks on potential subcontractors before working with them. Once they start to work with subcontractors, they continue to carefully review the work that they do. However, in common with other quality assurance activities, this work does not focus enough on the quality of teaching and assessment.

Too few younger students receive personal development and healthy living guidance because they either do not attend their planned sessions or the session does not happen due of a lack of staff. As a result, these students do not have a solid understanding of topics such as the impact of knife crime and healthy living. Students and apprentices do not always sufficiently develop their knowledge about how to spot the signs of extremism and/or radicalisation. As a result, too few students and apprentices can recall this learning and explain how to keep themselves and others safe from potential harm, either online or in their local environment.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that all students and apprentices receive adequate careers guidance. Most do not receive enough information on what they could do next. As a result, students and apprentices are not aware of the full range of opportunities open to them on completion of their programme.

Leaders and managers do not make sure that all young students get access to work-related activity or formal work experience. Too few students, including those students with high needs on programmes specifically designed for them, take part in

meaningful work experience placements. As a result, they do not fully develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours linked to employability and the realities of working life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers meet their statutory requirements. They employ staff using safer recruitment arrangements. The designated safeguarding lead is appropriately knowledgeable and has the full support of senior leaders and governors. Safeguarding concerns are appropriately managed and recorded clearly with action taken.

Students and apprentices feel comfortable about raising any safeguarding concerns on all campuses. They are clear about who they would talk to if they had concerns. They are confident that staff would take their concerns seriously and would deal with them quickly and sensitively.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Increase the number of learners who benefit from work-related activity and/or formal work experience.
- Provide a comprehensive personal development programme for all students and apprentices.
- Improve the quality and range of impartial careers information, advice and guidance.
- Enhance quality assurance to focus more on the quality of education.
- Ensure that all staff get the professional development they need to improve their practice so that they better understand how to support learners with high needs and provide more useful feedback for students and apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131094
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Website	www.cityofbristol.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Julia Gray
Provider type	General Further Education College
Date of previous inspection	12 to 15 November 2019
Main subcontractors	Hartcliffe & Withywood Ventures Cabot Learning Federation The Skills Centre London (TSCL) The Park Circomedia

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, quality and curriculum, as nominee, and the vice principal, corporate services and external relations, as the skills 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

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