

# Inspection of Cornwall College

Inspection dates:

28 to 31 January 2025

**Overall effectiveness****Outstanding**

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

**Information about this provider**

The Cornwall College Group comprises eight centres in Cornwall and two in Devon. There are two general further education campuses at Camborne and St Austell, three land-based studies campuses at Stoke Climsland, Bicton and Rosewarne. Specialist provision takes place at Falmouth Marine School, Newquay University Centre, the Eden Project and golf at St Mellion Resort. The college has a dedicated Engineering Skills Centre in Plymouth. It also provides education and training in outreach centres and with many local employers and partners.

At the time of the inspection, there were around 3,000 learners on programmes for young people, including nearly 400 receiving high-needs funding. Learners also study T levels in health and in early years.

Around 1,500 adult learners study at the college. They mostly study part-time health and social care subjects. Adult learners study Skills Bootcamps in construction or engineering.

The college has around 1,500 apprentices across levels 2 to 7. Around half of the apprentices study construction or engineering. Apprentices also study subjects such

as agriculture, veterinary nursing, manufacturing and horticulture. Around two-fifths of apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Most young apprentices study at level 2 or level 3.

The college works with seven subcontractors, two for education programmes for young people and five for adult learning programmes.

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

Learners and apprentices, including those studying at subcontractors, highly value the exceptional learning opportunities that staff provide. Teachers motivate them to take advantage of the excellent learning resources they use, which replicate those found in industry. Learners and apprentices studying at the specialist centres, including the Falmouth Marine School and Eden Project, are highly motivated to learn in aspirational environments. They are taught highly complex knowledge and skills such as yacht building and eco-system restoration.

Learners and apprentices study in the very supportive learning environments that teachers create. For example, adult learners studying an access to higher education in health course rapidly develop their self-belief in their academic writing skills in preparation for their future university studies. Learners with high needs studying a preparation for employment course learn how to debate appropriately by becoming considerate of others' viewpoints.

Learners and apprentices practise learning new skills and behaviours using high-quality resources in industry-standard facilities. For example, apprentices studying veterinary nursing work with a very wide range of small, large and exotic animals and practise using radiography equipment and an operating theatre. Young learners studying a heavy goods vehicle course practise using a mixture of new and old vehicles so they develop the broad experiences employers tell staff they need. The excellent learning spaces that staff have created contribute to learners and apprentices being highly motivated and encourage high attendance to their lessons.

Learners and apprentices highly value the excellent experiences they gain to improve their personal skills. For example, learners with high needs develop communication and teamwork skills by frequently participating in community projects such as supporting local food banks. They build their confidence and independence by completing inspirational work experience placements, which for a few includes working in a restaurant in Spain or Portugal.

Learners and apprentices know how to contribute positively to society because they learn from projects closely linked to their vocational courses. Staff work closely with local organisations to provide very well-planned course-related opportunities such as charitable community events. For example, young learners studying a T-level course in early years education volunteer at a creche facility to support disadvantaged local families in need of childcare assistance.

Staff use their close relationships with employers to provide learners and apprentices with extensive learning opportunities. This means learners gain very useful experiences to apply their newly learned skills and behaviours. For example, learners studying arboriculture practise their skills using very large and complex trees at employers' countryside estates, such as those owned by The National Trust or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They are confident that staff would respond to their welfare concerns swiftly and appropriately. This is because staff provide an inclusive, welcoming and caring environment. Staff teach learners about risks to their safety so they know how to react in an emergency. For example, learners know about the 'run-hide-tell' strategy in the event of a terrorist incident.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders very successfully use highly effective partnerships to meet training needs for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and in areas of Devon. They work very closely with stakeholders, such as Cornwall Council and education partners, to align the curriculum offer very closely to the local skills improvement plan. Leaders use employer labour market intelligence and information from numerous employer advisory boards, such as Cornwall Manufacturers Group, exceptionally well to help meet training needs. For example, they meet skills needs in engineering and manufacturing through a strong partnership with Pendennis Shipyard.

Leaders provide essential training to meet the needs of smaller local businesses, such as Mount Vets for veterinary nursing. They have worked successfully in partnership with the Eden Project to develop a specialist training centre where they have co-designed and taught an ecologist degree apprenticeship. Senior leaders have positioned the college well to meet the future training needs in Cornwall, including designing the curriculum in agricultural technology at its Future Farm at the Stoke Climsland campus in collaboration with Mole Valley Farmers.

Leaders have very effectively established groups of stakeholders, many of whom are small- or micro-businesses, to ensure that the design and teaching of the curriculum meets the training needs of the different industries they serve. Managers continually use the feedback from local stakeholders very well to improve the curriculum, including technical, employability, English and mathematical skills. For example, teachers of a heavy goods vehicle maintenance course focus more on improving learners' specific hand tool skills and English skills in response to employer feedback.

Leaders very effectively improve employment prospects for adult learners. For example, they work closely with Jobcentre Plus to meet training needs by providing Skills Bootcamps in welding and with Cornwall Council Resettlement Service to provide bespoke courses in developing basic English language skills.

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

Leaders and managers are very ambitious for their learners and apprentices. They provide a very broad range of vocational courses to meet the needs of learners and apprentices in the many different areas the college serves in Cornwall and Devon. Because of this, the college powerfully tackles the social, economic and geographical disadvantages of its learners and apprentices. For example, the college provides

accessible learning opportunities to adult learners on Skills Bootcamps in construction to address the local skills shortage for the reopening of South Crofty Tin Mine. Learners with high needs study a supported internship course to build their employability skills at high-quality work placements with employers that are local to them.

Teachers use stakeholder feedback very effectively. They use this information to sequence curriculums to enable learners and apprentices to build new knowledge, skills and behaviours consistently well. For example, in response to employer feedback, bricklaying apprentices extend their skills by learning how to install fire stops in cavity walls.

Teachers are subject specialists with relevant and substantial industry knowledge and expertise. They use their experience very well to enrich learning. For example, young learners studying arboriculture, adult learners studying horticulture and apprentices studying ecology all benefit from lessons teachers relate to real-world scenarios. Teachers are well supported by managers so they can visit employers to learn about changes in their vocations. Because of this, teachers ensure that learners and apprentices learn the most up-to-date techniques for their future careers.

Teachers provide high-quality teaching and training to learners and apprentices. They use their specialist knowledge to revisit topics and identify misconceptions so that they can provide helpful explanations and useful feedback. For example, learners with high needs studying a personal independence course use the knowledge that they have previously learned to complete tasks more independently such as accurately weighing ingredients to cook meals.

Leaders have taken very effective actions to create a productive developmental culture where teachers take responsibility for their own professional development. Teachers select aspects of their teaching that they seek to develop and use expert support from teaching and learning coaches to improve their weaknesses or develop their strengths further. Leaders ensure that when teachers' lessons are visited as part of quality assurance activities, their progress towards their chosen area of development is revisited. Teaching and learning coaches provide newly appointed teachers with a thorough induction programme. For example, teachers receive comprehensive training in planning impactful lessons, including for learners and apprentices with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders use their assessment of the quality of education to identify the overarching professional development themes that will have the most impact and reflect the curriculum and skills priorities.

Teachers use assessment very effectively to deepen their learners' and apprentices' understanding and to make adjustments for those with SEND. For example, teachers complete a rigorous skills-related assessment so they know what their apprentices can already do. Teaching staff use this information to provide apprentices with individualised training plans, including making adjustments for those with SEND.

Teachers use questioning techniques skilfully to expand learners' understanding and encourage deeper critical thinking. This helps young learners develop problem-solving skills and confidence in articulating the reasoning behind their answers. For example, teachers ask young learners studying a sports coaching course to analyse complex physiological concepts in multiple sports examples such as the impact of creatine-phosphate on elite performers.

Teachers ensure that learners and apprentices develop substantial new knowledge and skills from their identified starting points and produce work to a very high standard. Teachers prepare learners and apprentices extremely well for their next stage of education or employment. They ensure that most learners and apprentices, including those studying at subcontractors, achieve their qualifications. However, learners with high needs studying English and mathematics qualifications do not achieve as well as their peers.

Leaders ensure that the apprenticeships they provide are closely aligned with the local skills improvement plan. For example, around half of apprentices study a construction or engineering course and over one-fifth study an agriculture or animal care course. These courses include highly specialised subjects such as marine engineering and veterinary nursing. Leaders are tackling social disadvantage in the areas they serve because the niche subjects they provide would not otherwise be available to apprentices. Leaders have taken on apprentices who transferred from another training provider, and this, combined with the legacy of COVID-19 on a few longer apprenticeships, has adversely impacted achievement rates. Apprentices receive very high-quality training and support, which is leading to a steady increase in the proportion who achieve their qualifications.

Governors are highly ambitious for learners and apprentices at the college. They are committed to and passionate about the contribution the college makes to the economy and the communities it serves. They use their skills and experience in education, strategy and finance to make well-considered decisions with leaders about the shape and content of the college's curriculum.

Governors have sensibly supported leaders to focus on improving and assuring the quality of education. They ensure that there is a secure basis for the development and implementation of strategic curriculum decisions. Governors use their expertise to work with leaders, managers and other staff to swiftly improve weaker areas. For example, governors chair a group of staff to focus on improvements identified in the college's provision for learners with high needs. Governors are kept well-informed by leaders and gain assurance that these weaknesses are rapidly improving and are having a positive impact.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Provider details

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unique reference number     | 130627                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Address                     | Corporate Headquarters<br>Cornwall College St Austell<br>Tregonissey Road<br>St Austell<br>Cornwall<br>PL25 4DJ                                                                                                                                            |
| Contact number              | 01726226557                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Website                     | <a href="http://www.cornwall.ac.uk">www.cornwall.ac.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Principal                   | Rob Bosworth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Provider type               | General further education college                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Date of previous inspection | 8 to 11 February 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Main subcontractors         | Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change Limited<br>Learning Curve Group Limited<br>Plymouth Argyle Football in the Community Trust<br>South West Skills Academy<br>Studio 4 Dance CIC<br>The Skills Network Limited<br>Urban Biodiversity CIC – Newquay Orchard |

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the group deputy 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 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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