

Inspection of Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education

Inspection dates: 5–8 October 2021

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 of Further and Higher Education (NCC) is a large general further education college based in Norfolk. It has merged twice, first in 2017 with Paston Sixth Form College and in 2020 with the Easton College campus of the former Easton and Otley College. It operates from three main sites, providing a curriculum offer across all subject sector areas from pre-entry level to level 6.

NCC's Norwich College site offers vocational programmes, A-level provision, adult learning, apprenticeships, T levels in childcare, T levels in digital and construction, and a large special educational needs provision. Paston College provides A-level provision, level 2 and level 3 vocational provision in health and social care, business, computing, arts and sports and T levels in childcare. Easton College provides programmes in land-based studies, sport and public services and construction, with some associated apprenticeships. There is also a medium-sized special educational needs and/or disabilities provision at Easton College.

At the time of the visit, there were around 9,000 students. Two thirds of the student population is aged 16 to 18. There were 5,708 students on study programmes,

1,436 students on apprenticeship programmes and 1,022 adult students. NCC has 330 students with high needs. NCC has a large English speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. NCC works with two subcontractors.

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

Students with high needs feel exceptionally well supported by their learning support assistants and teaching staff. They feel highly valued by staff, who understand precisely what their needs, goals and aspirations are. As a result, students blossom and develop absolute confidence in achieving their ambitious targets.

ESOL students enjoy coming to the college. Over time, they become much more confident in using English in their lives, often from knowing no English on arriving in this country. They gradually communicate more easily with neighbours, can make appointments with the doctor for their families and can discuss their children's progress at school with teachers. With students' new skills in English, they gain employment, get better jobs or go on to university.

Students and apprentices feel safe. Staff promote a positive and inclusive culture where everyone feels valued. Students and apprentices benefit from a calm and orderly learning environment. They find teachers encouraging and supportive of their personal and emotional needs. They feel confident to report concerns, including any inappropriate behaviours, such as bullying or sexual harassment, should they arise. At Easton College, residential students feel cared for by staff and have confidence that staff will immediately tackle any issues related to their safety or the poor behaviour of others. Students value having a voice in the improvements under way to continue with the reform and modernisation of the farm estate.

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

Leaders provide an ambitious curriculum that ensures high-quality training for students and apprentices, particularly those with high needs. Since the previous inspection, governors and leaders have overseen two successful mergers. During this time, they have continued to strengthen and develop a rich and well-resourced curriculum.

Students with high needs are exceptionally well prepared for university, employment, to live independently or to live a semi-independent life with supported employment. Students with high needs studying on A-level and vocational programmes receive good help and advice to achieve their high aspirations. Additional help to make successful applications to prestigious universities results in students gaining places at their first-choice university.

Students on discrete provision learn about hygiene in the workplace, understanding that it is clearly transferable to living on their own. They are given practical advice and know how to walk and travel safely. Teachers carefully plan individual learning

that builds students' knowledge, skills and confidence. Teachers make good use of the realistic work environments to allow students to develop the skills they will need when they progress to supported employment. Teachers skilfully use opportunities in practical sessions to encourage a healthy lifestyle, using accessible language. Students understand the importance of exercise in living a healthy and active life. Through their gardening and food preparation lessons, they learn the importance of eating vegetables and fresh fruit as part of a healthy diet.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have provided effective continuing professional development to staff at the Norwich and Paston College sites to improve the quality of their teaching, in particular their teaching of theory lessons. Teachers now carefully reinforce theoretical concepts as they build effectively on students' prior learning. On Access to Science programmes, teachers successfully combine theory with practice. Students study new topics, such as mass spectrometry in online workshops, which are skilfully supported by their teachers. Students are then able to quickly apply their new learning in practical chemistry sessions.

At Easton college, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good. Teachers do adapt their teaching of practical lessons effectively to meet the differing needs of students, but they have not yet improved their teaching of theory that underpins practical learning. Leaders have taken action to recruit new teaching staff. Course leadership is effective.

Teachers use effective teaching and assessment strategies to check students' learning, identify any skills gaps and reinforce key concepts. On A-level programmes, frequent assessment points identify students who need extra help. This help includes how to structure an essay, with explanations and analysis. Teachers provide useful catch-up sessions, where required. Teachers check students' recall of knowledge consistently well. In A-level biology, students seamlessly recall symbols for chemical compounds and apply their knowledge on how to use independent and dependent variables in experiments. Students are enthusiastic, motivated and want to succeed in their studies.

Apprentices develop good technical skills and knowledge. Teachers and assessors work hard to minimise the disruption to learning that apprentices suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Much focus is now on apprentices' practical learning and developing their technical proficiency. In carpentry, apprentices prepare for final exams using scaled-down models of the work they complete on site to practise and refine their skills. Apprentices put their sound understanding of theory to good use at work. In business administration, apprentices understand and apply Belbin's leadership theory to improve how they work in teams. Apprentices work safely, meeting the high expectations of employers and industry. In construction, apprentices use power tools safely and efficiently to improve the speed of their work. Apprentices working for the local authority maintaining street lighting are highly vigilant as they go about their work. They know to report a wide range of issues that may affect residents' safety.

Teachers work effectively with employers to ensure that apprentices are recruited onto the right programmes. Teachers check on apprentices' prior qualifications and carry out a detailed skills scan at the start of their programme. This helps teachers assess the skills and knowledge that apprentices already have. Teachers make good use of this information to plan the sequence of workplace tasks and activities that apprentices need to complete their training in their workplace.

Teachers have not ensured that the standard of students' English skills is good. Teachers do not consistently identify English errors in students' assessment work or enable them to improve their academic writing skills in preparation for their next steps. Students' work often contains spelling and grammatical errors, such as lack of punctuation or the incorrect use of capital letters. Students' ability to use technical language in all subjects is effective.

Students and apprentices develop and improve their mathematical skills. Teachers make good use of naturally occurring opportunities to progress students' mathematics skills and promote the importance of mathematics effectively as part of the curriculum. In level 3 agriculture, students can apply their knowledge of ratios to their work in spraying crops. In level 3 public services, students improve their mathematics skills through mastering navigation and compass-reading skills.

ESOL teachers place insufficient emphasis on students developing good spoken English. Too few ESOL students develop good pronunciation and speech intonations over time. They are often unable to express their views and opinions clearly using standard speech patterns. Students build their confidence gradually in speaking and listening in English, before moving on to develop their skills in reading and writing. Most students complete their examinations successfully and move on to the next level of the national ESOL core curriculum.

Students display positive attitudes to learning and are well motivated to develop and improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices develop their communication and interpersonal skills extremely effectively, which helps them to be better at their jobs and gain promotion. Students and apprentices are respectful if challenged about any boisterous behaviour by teachers and managers. As a result, students and apprentices behave well and quickly adapt to the college culture of tolerance and respect for all.

Leaders ensure that students receive good, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to enable them to progress to their next steps. Teachers and managers support students to do well and plan a broad range of effective curriculum activities to ensure that they have a positive and enriching educational experience. However, apprentices receive limited CEIAG. In addition, they do not receive relevant and focused career discussions with their teachers and assessors about their next steps.

Governors have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision across the college. Governors have suitable skills and expertise to fulfil their assigned roles, such as safeguarding and curriculum and quality. They play an

active role in monitoring the weaknesses in the curriculum and hold leaders appropriately to account. Governors frequently meet with leaders and challenge them to improve. As a result, leaders have implemented robust actions to drive continued improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are well trained. DSLs work very effectively with multi-agencies, such as social workers, Channel and the police, to prevent students from becoming radicalised.

Students have a good understanding of health and safety practices at work. In the land-based provision at Easton College, teachers have placed a strong focus on improving health and safety, which was previously extremely poor. Teachers have now eradicated poor health and safety practices, resulting in a dramatically improved learning experience for students.

Most students have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and the signs that someone may display if they are being radicalised. They know how to report concerns and are fully aware of the risks posed to them. Students have a good understanding of local risks, such as knife crime and the potential for their drinks to be spiked with drugs when they are out socialising.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Teachers must ensure that students develop good English skills. Teachers need to ensure that students produce written work of a high quality.
- Leaders need to ensure that teachers place sufficient emphasis on ESOL students developing good spoken English so they can express their views clearly and assimilate into their community effectively.
- Leaders need to ensure that apprentices receive good, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to enable them to progress to their next steps and understand the breadth of career opportunities open to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130764
Address	Ipswich Road Norwich Norfolk NR2 2LJ
Contact number	01603773311
Website	www.ccn.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Corrienne Peasgood
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	7–10 February 2017
Main subcontractors	Norfolk County Council KLM UK Engineering

Information about this inspection

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 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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