

Bridgwater and Taunton College

General further education college

Inspection dates

5–8 March 2019

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding	Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders' determined and ambitious actions are improving the lives of learners and members of the community. Employers, learners, other partners and staff are extremely positive about the successes already achieved. Improvements continue apace.
- Leaders managed the merger of two large colleges extremely well to create quickly a clear vision, a common culture and a strong ethos across all campuses.
- Partnerships with employers and other stakeholders lead to excellent opportunities for learners. High-quality resources contribute significantly to the high standards of work produced by learners and apprentices.
- Leaders' innovative approaches have developed a wide range of courses that meet very specific local, regional and national needs well.
- Governors are very well informed and their challenge to leaders, advocacy of local needs and knowledge of the college have been central to the college's rapid improvement and success.
- Welfare and support services, including those for safeguarding learners, are exceptionally effective. The needs of learners with high needs are met very well.
- The programme of personal development – the 'BTC Advantage' – provides exceptionally enriching experiences for many learners and underpins the outstanding personal development, behaviour and welfare at the college.
- Most teachers plan and deliver programmes well. Their teaching skills are enhanced by the carefully focused training and support they receive.
- The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications has improved on most programmes and is now high. It remains too low for adults on level 3 courses and GCSEs in English and mathematics for younger learners.
- A minority of younger learners, particularly on A-level courses, do not make the progress expected of them relative to their prior qualifications.
- An exceptionally responsive curriculum meets the needs of adult learners exceptionally well, especially the most disadvantaged.
- Apprentices develop an extensive range of skills and knowledge and many extend and deepen specialist skills beyond the requirements of their qualifications.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Bridgwater and Taunton College was formed through a merger of Somerset College of Arts and Technology and Bridgwater College in June 2016. The college has a separate campus at Cannington for land-based programmes and the National College for Nuclear, Southern Hub.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 14,149 learners and 2,451 apprentices enrolled. A small number of learners aged 14 to 15 are enrolled on part-time programmes. These were not within the scope of this inspection. Just over half the funding received by the college is for 16 to 19 study programmes and around a quarter is for adult learning programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the planning and delivery of programmes, particularly on A-level and GCSE courses, take account of all learners' progress to date and build on their prior knowledge, skills and understanding effectively.
- Provide feedback to all learners, particularly younger learners taking English and mathematics, that clearly identifies what they need to do to improve the standards of their work.
- Monitor closely the impact of actions being taken to improve the English and mathematics GCSE results and act quickly to revise these if achievements in these subjects remain low.
- Ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all learners in lessons and tasks so that they acquire new knowledge quickly and master the concepts that they are taught.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Since 2016, leaders have managed the merger of two very different colleges extremely well. Their implementation of a clear vision and strategy, supported by staff, employers and local communities, has quickly led to a single culture across all campuses that unites the college. This is underpinned by the well-developed systems and processes that staff use well to benefit their learners.
- As a result of exceptionally thoughtful leadership and management, the college provides outstanding opportunities for its learners. Apprenticeships and provision for adults and learners with high needs are outstanding, and 16 to 19 study programmes are improving.
- Senior leaders have successfully implemented a highly ambitious strategy for the college to improve the lives of people in the local area. Leaders provide a wide range of high-quality facilities for their learners. Many of these are the result of collaborative investment by strategic partners. These facilities are modern and designed for current and future training needs. They include an energy skills centre, a university centre, an advanced engineering centre, a specialist training facility for the nuclear industry and a construction and civil engineering centre.
- Leaders and managers convincingly demonstrate that learners are at the centre of their decisions. Learners appreciate the impact that the highly supportive culture and extremely wide range of support have on the strong progress that the vast majority of them make.
- Leaders' high aspirations for local residents, particularly those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, are evident through the many initiatives they successfully introduce to support specific groups. For example, their commitment to providing a supportive ethos for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners is highly valued. Staff are very supportive of the college's leaders. A large majority are highly motivated by the professional development they receive and by their managers' encouragement to innovate and improve the experience they provide for their learners.
- Senior and middle managers provide a diverse curriculum and relentlessly focus on improving its effectiveness. The curriculum is very carefully constructed to provide clear progression routes to higher-level courses or employment. Adults and younger learners at all levels develop the skills needed to progress into sectors providing a lot of employment in the area. These include nuclear and civil engineering, healthcare and agriculture.
- Leaders and managers have developed exceptional partnerships to make the most of the opportunities their learners have to progress to employment or further training. These partners include large and small employers, councils, schools, community organisations, NHS trusts and universities. They also have a unique and successful partnership with a nearby college to provide apprenticeships for the military and armed forces.
- College leaders are highly skilled at working with international, national and local employers to plan and develop a curriculum that takes account of the future direction of industries. For example, they are closely involved with partners in the development of a large-scale project to develop new jobs in the clean energy industry. Employers are particularly positive about the training provided for apprenticeships. A rapidly expanding distance learning provision provides training to healthcare workers that improves the care

they provide to their clients. Subcontracted provision is managed very well.

- Managers have successfully increased the proportion of female apprentices in science, technology and engineering. They do this by closely working with local schools to enthuse children at an early age about career opportunities in construction, engineering and nuclear energy. For example, they involve schools in building projects at the college, and apprentices mentor younger learners to foster their interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- Managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision very well as a result of carefully designed and implemented quality assurance processes. They provide very useful training for teachers to improve their teaching. Managers know which courses need to improve and are taking determined action to bring about these improvements. Managers have recently given some of their highly valued teachers the responsibility to support colleagues. These teachers have a positive impact on the morale, confidence and skills of colleagues, who feel confident to experiment with innovative ideas. However, a minority of courses for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults at level 3 have not improved quickly enough and managers have more to do to ensure that these reach the very highest standards.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are very well informed through the detailed reports they receive from managers. They enhance their knowledge, frequently taking part in reviews of courses and through discussions with staff and learners. As a result, governors are well equipped to provide a high level of support and challenge to leaders and managers.
- Governors bring a wealth of professional experience to their roles, including expertise in safeguarding and finance. Many governors successfully served on the boards of the two colleges before they merged. Their leadership through the merger and their strong focus on the quality of their learners' experience have been central to the success of the college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective as a result of the high priority placed on this by leaders and managers. Managers have highly effective systems in place to identify, support and monitor learners who may be at risk. These include the small number of part-time, home-educated learners aged 14 to 16 who attend at Cannington. They work very well with local agencies to ensure that learners receive the help they need. Staff and learners know how to report any concerns and, if necessary, they involve external organisations swiftly.
- Staff are well trained on their responsibilities, including those related to the 'Prevent' duty. The dedicated safeguarding team is very well informed and shares information appropriately. All mandatory checks on staff and subcontractors are completed promptly. Learners and apprentices know how to stay safe on social media and the actions they should take to protect themselves from risks online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The large majority of teachers and trainers have high expectations for their learners. They challenge them to do well through careful planning and the learning activities they provide. Learners enjoy the majority of their learning and their time at college. They mostly arrive at lessons on time and well prepared to learn.
- Learners' and apprentices' experience is greatly enhanced by the high-quality equipment, workshops and classrooms. Teachers use these resources well to ensure that learners' practical skills, knowledge and professional behaviours are at a standard expected by industry. For example, construction learners train outside in all weather conditions, building large-scale constructions with industrial equipment and facilities. Learners who have high needs and profound learning difficulties work confidently alongside their peers. They benefit from the technology, sensory equipment and facilities that provide the adjustments they need to succeed. Teachers train their learners well to be respectful of their environment and to take good care of the tools and equipment they use.
- Most teachers plan effective and interesting work. Most assess learners' progress effectively using a variety of methods, including probing questions, carefully prepared homework and imaginative assignments. They use information from their assessments well to further develop their teaching. Learners are clear about the new skills and knowledge they develop and the good progress they make at college. However, a small minority of teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' progress to date to plan and deliver programmes that help them to gain their qualification or reach the standards expected of them.
- Teachers make good use of digital resources, including the internet and mobile telephone applications, to reinforce and extend learning. Most learners use the college's web-based systems well to produce, submit and review their work and to track and monitor their own progress. As a result, learners take a high level of responsibility for their learning and develop good analysis and evaluation skills.
- Teachers and trainers are well qualified. They use their extensive vocational expertise well to link theory to practice, to motivate learners and apprentices and to prepare them for work. For example, teachers on distance learning courses are often practitioners who work in their industry. They use this experience extremely well to advise and guide their learners on how to be better practitioners. Construction instructors have very recently been working on large-scale industrial developments. They use the knowledge they have developed to teach their learners the latest industry practices. Many teachers regularly spend time in their industry in order to keep up to date.
- Staff identify learners' and apprentices' additional needs quickly and efficiently and ensure that learners who have high needs are provided with effective support. However, additional support for a small minority of learners is not effective. A small minority of teachers and support staff do not work together closely enough to ensure that the support staff know how best to engage with learners and support them.
- Teachers' assessment of learners' work is accurate and fair. Most teachers provide learners with useful and detailed feedback on their work, which enables them to make improvements. This includes feedback on technical content, presentation and their written English. As a result, the majority of learners' work is of a high standard and improves

over time. However, teachers' feedback on a small minority of learners' work is superficial and does not help them to improve. Consequently, these learners repeat the same mistakes in their work, which is occasionally poorly presented.

- College leaders know that the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics varies too much across the college and are keenly aware that this has not improved quickly enough. The teaching of English and mathematics too often lacks structure, pace and purpose. As a result, too many learners choose not to attend lessons in these subjects and do not achieve their qualifications.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning, are proud of their achievements and are keen to excel and progress to the next steps in their education or career. They rapidly develop self-assurance and confidence in practical workshops and use industry-standard equipment safely. Learners are very well prepared for work and their future careers.
- Apprentices are challenged successfully to develop specialist skills that go beyond the requirements of their qualifications. For example, in brickwork, an apprentice was allowed to work unsupervised on a customer's premises because he had learned how to make complex decisions himself. Imaginative teaching is instrumental in developing apprentices' wide range of skills. For example, apprentices on maintenance operations engineering and technical programmes plan a residential trip for a large group of their peers, and a group of mechanical apprentices renovated a derelict garden for community use.
- Learners on study programmes have extremely well-planned external work experience and work-related projects, and apprentices have high-quality jobs with local and national employers. These enable learners and apprentices to develop industrial and commercial skills, knowledge and behaviours that contribute well to employers' businesses.
- Teachers use their excellent relationships with employers and community groups to obtain placements that are very well suited to learners' aspirations. Some major employers with many apprentices have effectively developed well-structured mentoring schemes. These successfully help apprentices to develop rapidly their knowledge of an industry and achieve their apprenticeship.
- Staff successfully support learners' personal development through effectively promoting the value and importance of personal, social and work-related skills. Learners quickly develop and recognise their improving skills in problem-solving, teamwork and time management. Learners work in a culture of respect across the college – a culture that is clearly articulated and promoted by staff at all levels.
- Teachers and learners frequently assess improvements in behaviours and attitudes in order to gauge progress and identify the steps each learner needs to take to make further improvements. Teachers and learners use a personal development programme to help learners have higher aspirations, increase confidence and improve communication extremely well. This programme is central to many of the high-quality opportunities learners have to extend their personal experiences beyond qualifications at college.
- Standards of written and practical vocational work are high. Learners and apprentices know what they need to do to improve. The academic and personal targets learners set for themselves or agree with their teacher are mostly very well considered. They focus

learners' minds very effectively on the most important things they need to do to improve.

- Learners and apprentices receive excellent impartial careers advice and guidance. Opportunities for careers and further learning are clear and most learners are well informed about what they want to do next. Learners value the high-quality, specialist guidance from their teachers. Teachers use their industry contacts and experience well to help learners determine their career goals and how to achieve them. College advisers help learners and apprentices to write a high-quality curriculum vitae and letters of application and help them prepare well for interviews.
- Learners know how to raise concerns and get help. Learners feel safe and supported in college and on work experience. The care and attention that staff at all levels give to learners' welfare are outstanding.
- The vast majority of learners on study programmes gain highly useful personal, social and employability skills through the college's excellent enrichment programme. This programme is carefully planned to encourage the involvement of learners who may not otherwise participate. For example, sports learners provide specific activities for learners who do not exercise enough and for healthcare learners who need to develop the strength needed to do their job safely. Other learners work with a local charity to teach English and mathematics in the local area and the learners' LGBT group has helped to train staff.
- The vast majority of learners attend well and are punctual for sessions. However, in English and mathematics, attendance is too low and strategies to improve attendance have had too little impact. Leaders and managers are aware that adults who attend full-time vocational and A-level programmes would benefit from learning more about the workplace to develop work-related skills. Effective plans are in place to address this issue.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Most of the large number of adults on part-time courses successfully complete and achieve their qualifications. Learners who take distance learning courses to improve their job-related skills have particularly high achievements. The smaller number who attend college-based qualifications do not do so well.
- Around 600 adults study on full-time level 2 and 3 courses. Leaders' and managers' focused efforts are improving achievement rates on level 3 programmes to match the outcomes achieved on level 2 courses.
- A high proportion of adults taking GCSEs in English achieve their qualification at a grade 4 or above. However, a smaller proportion of the very small number who take GCSE mathematics are successful.
- A high proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 on level 2 and 3 courses complete and achieve their main qualifications. At level 3, this proportion has improved considerably over the last two years.
- In 2017/18, the proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses who achieved the grades expected of them increased, when taking their previous achievement into account. For vocational learners, this increase was significant. However, for A-level learners, the increase has been too slow and not enough achieve their expected grades.

- Adults and learners aged 16 to 18 develop their personal and social skills and behaviours well as a result of the strong focus on these by their teachers.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeship has increased and is now high. However, this high level of achievement masks some variations. Around four out of five apprentices at level 3 are successful but this proportion drops to just over two out of three at level 2.
- Learners who have high needs achieve very well and a high number progress to higher-level courses or employment. For many, the provision is life-changing and learners make significant progress from their starting points.
- Too few learners aged 16 to 18 achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE English or mathematics. Around one in five who take a GCSE English achieve a grade 4 or above. In mathematics, this proportion falls to only one in 10. Both adult and learners aged 16 to 18 taking functional skills qualifications are more successful and a high proportion of these complete and pass their qualification.
- The achievement of learners aged 16 to 18 on full-time level 2 and 3 vocational study programmes varies considerably between subjects. In science, mathematics, information technology, social sciences and business, a very high proportion of these learners complete and achieve their qualifications. However, the proportion who are successful is lower in agriculture and horticulture, health and care, construction, planning and the built environment, retail and commercial enterprises, and travel and tourism.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- At the time of inspection, approximately 3,484 learners were enrolled on study programmes. Most attend the Bridgwater campus, including over 300 who study A levels. Study programmes are offered in all subject areas and meet the principles of 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Leaders' strong commitment to working with employers benefits learners on study programmes. For example, they have established a '999 academy' for learners interested in careers in the uniformed services. This successful venture was developed in collaboration with, and is valued, by local fire and rescue, ambulance and police services.
- The college's study programme provides an excellent breadth of curriculum that is tailored well to specific groups of learners. This includes a prestigious programme accredited by a national body for women's football, which allows talented female footballers to pursue their career while gaining qualifications.
- The majority of learners benefit from high-quality and relevant work experience that prepares them well for employment. Learners are supported by the college and are positive about the value of work experience and work-related projects. Learners are clear about how their work experience has improved their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- In most study programmes, teaching and learning are good. However, they are not yet consistently of a high standard across all subjects. Teachers use their knowledge of their industry or subject well to set relevant and challenging assignments. They use skilful questioning to challenge and probe learners' understanding to help them to improve.

However, a small minority of teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently. These learners do not acquire new knowledge quickly enough or master the concepts they have been taught.

- Learners studying A levels who fall behind in their learning receive well-targeted interventions by their teachers. These include individual support plans and collaboration with parents and carers to help them to improve.
- Staff use their industry knowledge well to motivate learners. For example, in agricultural subjects, learners learn about how to procure machinery and to calculate depreciation. This contributes to learners developing business and numeracy skills.
- The standards of learners' vocational work are high. For example, in art and design, learners produce work that is experimental, well researched and well presented. They use a range of processes and techniques, such as chemical photography processing, digital processes and print, with confidence.
- Most learners are punctual and rarely miss lessons. Learners are respectful of their peers and teachers. Learners have exceptionally valuable opportunities to contribute to each other's development. Learners support each other as advocates and coaches, which develops their personal skills and confidence. For example, a sports learner ran fitness sessions for learners who have learning and physical difficulties.
- Too often, teaching in English and mathematics is not well planned. For example, teachers do not routinely take account of learners' prior knowledge when planning courses. As a result, learners do not improve their knowledge quickly enough. Too many learners are not clear about what they need to do to improve. In a minority of English and mathematics lessons, learners are not motivated to learn.
- A small minority of teachers do not plan learning or support which ensure that learners develop a deep enough understanding of the subject. Consequently, not all learners make substantial progress in achieving the highest standards of which they are capable.

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

- At the time of the inspection, 8,264 learners were attending adult courses from entry level to level 3. Each year, approximately 6,000 adult learners enrol on distance learning programmes and 2,000 on courses organised in collaboration with local community groups such as the carnival clubs. The remaining adults attend courses at one of the college's campuses.
- Leaders' and managers' work with local employers and community groups is highly effective. Together, they have developed an exceptionally responsive curriculum. This successfully helps adults develop new skills, find new work or progress to further education or training.
- Leaders and managers have an extremely strong and successful focus on providing education for the most disadvantaged local people and those living in the most deprived areas. They find highly effective and creative ways to work with the local community organisations to develop courses. For example, carnival clubs and horticulture projects provide opportunities for large numbers of local adults, including those with learning needs or mental health challenges, as well as members of the transient population. Through these, learners build their self-esteem, feel valued and progress into

employment and further learning.

- Learners on the community courses develop a keen sense of purpose and belonging through a highly responsive local provision. Carnival has been at the heart of Bridgwater's cultural tradition since the 19th century. College leaders have carefully integrated training into this unique local tradition that brings new skills and opportunities to local people. As a result, the college supports its community to thrive and become more prosperous.
- Learners develop very strong subject knowledge and technical skills in the subjects they study. In both academic and vocational courses, learners are able to clearly identify and describe what they have learned over time and how this helps them achieve their goals. Teachers' assessments provide the large majority of learners with the detailed feedback they need in order to improve.
- Learners on distance learning courses make excellent progress in developing their knowledge and skills. They produce work of a high standard. These learners receive detailed feedback which clearly explains what they need to do to improve and provides useful information on further research opportunities.
- Learners benefit from very caring and dedicated staff who support them to attend, even when they are struggling in their personal lives. For example, learners on Access to Higher Education courses are able to access presentations and resources electronically before lessons. Learners speak enthusiastically of the progress they have made and their future aspirations. For the vast majority of Access learners, the course has helped them secure a place at their preferred university.
- Learners on distance learning programmes are supported very well to remain on programme and complete their qualification. Staff monitor their progress very closely. When learners do not submit work within the required 30-day period, they are individually supported to get back on track. As a result, an extremely high proportion of learners on distance learning programmes successfully complete their course.
- Many learners develop skills that are highly valued by employers, such as problem-solving, event management, teamworking, literacy and numeracy.
- A small minority of learners across adult learning provision do not produce work of a high enough standard. Some teachers do not challenge these learners to make rapid enough progress and do not check that all learners understand the content of a lesson.
- In community provision, a small minority of teachers do not set out sufficiently detailed targets and goals for learners to achieve on their course. As a result, a few teachers cannot accurately identify learners' progress or provide clear enough feedback on how they can produce work of a higher standard.

Apprenticeships

Outstanding

- At the time of the inspection, 1,936 apprentices were on programme. Around 640 apprenticeships were at level 2 and 1,170 at level 3, with 120 at higher levels. The largest proportion of apprentices follow programmes in engineering and manufacturing, construction and planning, and agriculture and horticulture. Apprenticeships fully meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.
- Exceptionally strong partnerships with employers underpin the apprenticeship provision.

College staff work very effectively with employers to design apprenticeship programmes that meet local priorities such as agriculture, construction, health and the nuclear industry. For example, the apprenticeship in community healthcare addresses the skills gaps in stroke rehabilitation, mental health and school nursing. A large producer of luxury leather goods is highly complimentary about the college's success in delivering a very bespoke apprenticeship programme, in which apprentices produce work at the standard expected by their customers.

- Resources for learning are excellent. Apprentices use modern equipment of the kind found in their industry. This gives apprentices the opportunity to practise, and gain confidence in, their new skills and knowledge before returning to the workplace.
- Apprentices are prepared well for qualifications or final assessments. Where appropriate, apprentices' programmes are enhanced with additional qualifications to improve their career prospects or to ensure that the apprentice is more effective in the workplace. For example, heavy vehicle apprentices complete a lorry refrigeration qualification, plumbers gain gas qualifications and construction apprentices learn to use earth excavators.
- Trainers set high expectations for apprentices that reflect workplace practices. For example, mechanical engineering apprentices work as a team in rotating the responsibilities for the maintenance of the college workshops' lathes and grinding and milling machines.
- Most trainers have recent vocational experience. They use this very effectively to demonstrate how theory and training apply in the workplace. Apprentices are highly motivated and enthused by this. When apprentices need very specialist teaching, employers readily support the college. For example, a guest lecturer from a food and drink manufacturing business trains apprentices on the latest regulations required on food and drink production lines.
- A large majority of apprentices achieve their apprenticeships within the planned timescale and a very large majority remain employed, secure promotion or progress to a higher-level apprenticeship. Apprentices develop excellent and up-to-date vocational skills that improve their employer's business. For example, two agricultural apprentices applied their college-based training in biosecurity to introduce foot dips and new approaches to the sterilisation of milking equipment. This resulted in a reduced number of mastitis cases. A hospitality apprentice took responsibility for selecting and successfully producing the starter and dessert menu for a fine-dining restaurant.
- Assessors and trainers hold frequent reviews with apprentices. They use these extremely well to help apprentices plan their long-term career aspirations. As a result, apprentices acquire a good understanding of career pathways and employment opportunities. For example, apprentices working for the Ministry of Defence were excited to learn they have a variety of opportunities available at the end of their programme, including electrical engineering in submarines or ships and management roles throughout the country.
- During reviews with apprentices, assessors and trainers accurately identify work that apprentices need to prioritise in order to achieve their qualification or prepare for a final assessment. However, a few reviews do not pay enough attention to ways in which apprentices can improve or develop their behaviours and personal skills.
- Trainers accurately assess apprentices when they start their apprenticeship in order to build a programme in which apprentices develop significant new skills and knowledge.

This initial assessment includes the apprentices' mathematics and English knowledge. However, except in apprenticeships with mathematical content, this information is not routinely used to improve many apprentices' mathematical knowledge further.

Provision for learners with high needs

Outstanding

- Approximately 300 learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding were enrolled at the college at the time of inspection. Over half of these were on courses specifically for those needing high levels of support. The remainder were on academic and vocational courses throughout the college.
- Leaders and managers use this funding exceptionally well to enable learners to develop their independence. They successfully develop provision in the local area for learners who have high needs. College staff work very closely with the special schools and other agencies to put in place the support learners need, well in advance of them starting their course at the college. For example, college staff visit local schools to observe learners, attend annual reviews and meet with parents. They also provide valuable opportunities for learners to visit the college at quiet times to alleviate learners' anxiety.
- As a result of their excellent knowledge of learners' needs long before they start at the college, staff carefully design individual programmes, including for those who have missed out on statutory education. Staff are highly skilled at designing programmes that meet a wide range of complex and challenging needs. This includes highly specialised provision for learners who have profound and multiple learning difficulties and specialised provision for learners previously disengaged from education.
- The college's specialist staff use the assessment information and information from education, health and care (EHC) plans they receive to devise strategies that are most successful with each learner. As a result, staff interaction with learners is of a high quality. Well-informed, comprehensive learner profiles identify clearly what support is most effective for individual learners.
- The extensive and varied range of provision is highly effective at helping learners progress to employment and to independent living. This includes those who have profound and multiple and/or severe learning difficulties, challenging behaviours, disengagement and disaffection.
- Learners have extensive opportunities to participate in work-related activities that prepare them very well for employment and independent living. These include work placements organised within the college, community-based placements and support towards employment through supported internships. For example, learners who have severe learning difficulties develop useful skills, such handling money and communication, by operating snack trolleys around the campus and selling plants and craft products.
- All learners are taught work-readiness skills, including applying and preparing for interviews and health and safety. Learners on the supportive internship programme take part in a range of placements in a hospital setting. Such experiences contribute very effectively to around two thirds of these learners progressing to employment or apprenticeships.
- Learners make excellent progress in developing their personal and social skills. Many learners can explain clearly how these skills contribute to preparing them to progress to

further education or employment. Learners are very positive about how their behaviour, confidence and aspirations improve due to the support they receive at college.

- Most staff provide very clear targets for learners that help them make strong progress. However, targets for a few learners in English and mathematics are too general and learners are unclear of what they have to do to improve. Managers closely monitor learners' small steps in improving their behaviour. They can demonstrate how issues around challenging behaviour, physical damage, verbal aggression, verbal abuse and sexually inappropriate behaviour show significant improvement over time. These small steps ensure that learners progress well to higher-level vocational courses.
- Staff are well qualified and experienced. They have high expectations of learners and plan sessions thoroughly, taking into account learners' personal care and therapy requirements. College staff work well with a range of support agencies to ensure that expectations set out in EHC plans are met. However, some aspects of EHC plans, particularly those relating to health needs, are not wholly met due to the lack of access to external services.
- A highly experienced, well-trained team of support assistants works collaboratively to provide learners with high-quality support within their classes and their social times within college.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130803
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	14,000
Principal/CEO	Andy Berry
Telephone number	01278 455 464
Website	www.btc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	332	1559	890	3112	1820	440	13	51
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	349	307	329	809	19	102		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	38							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	302							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Cornwall College Learning Curve British Amateur Gymnastics Association N-Gaged Training and Recruitment University Hospital Bristol SW medicine Wet and High Adventures Ltd Skills Network							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of staff and quality services, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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Phil Romain	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Hallam	Ofsted Inspector
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Gavin Murray	Ofsted Inspector
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Employer View

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