

Inspection of Basingstoke College of Technology

Inspection dates: 30 January to 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Basingstoke College of Technology (BCoT) is a general further education college based in Basingstoke, Hampshire. The college has a main campus in the town centre and a Future Skills Centre that specialises in teaching construction trades based in Bordon, Hampshire.

At the time of the inspection there were around 1,200 16- to 18-year-old learners on vocational programmes from entry level to level 3. The college offers a broad curriculum, most learners study programmes at level 2 and 3, with popular areas being construction, media and games design and public services. There were around 1,300 learners on adult learning programmes, which include full-time, part-time and distance learning courses. Learners study a range of subjects such as counselling and accounting and an extensive selection of distance learning courses in areas such as nutrition, health and digital marketing. Around 50 learners were in receipt of high needs funding, with just over half being on foundation pathway programmes and the remainder on vocational programmes. Around 550 learners were on apprenticeships from level 2 to 5.

BCoT works with one subcontractor, West Berkshire Training Consortium, to provide functional skills to adult learners geographically remote from the college.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy their time learning at BCoT. Nearly all are positive, participate in learning enthusiastically and have high aspirations for their future. They behave well, and are polite and respectful. Staff set out their expectations for learners' conduct clearly and follow up quickly on the rare occasions where these are not met. In lessons, learners share their ideas and learn from each other readily. For example, in art and design learners provide constructive feedback on each other's work that helps improve the standard of their future work. Consequently, learners quickly develop trusting and respectful relationships with each other and staff that mirror those expected in the workplace.

Learners feel safe at BCoT. They value the safe campus that leaders have created by controlling access to the site and the friendly staff who are readily available to support them. Learners are confident that if they ask for help, it will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. They know that they can talk to staff, use the online 'Speak up' button or visit the Haven, a welcoming and calm space leaders have created for learners and where staff are readily available to support them. Learners also have a high level of understanding of how to keep themselves safe in vocational areas by applying appropriate health and safety practices.

Learners on programmes for young people are motivated and attentive to staff. They enjoy their lessons, which is reflected by their high attendance and good punctuality. They rightly appreciate the interesting and stimulating lessons that most teachers provide. For example, teachers in hospitality use their experience of working in prestigious hotels, in countries such as New Zealand, America and Australia, to enthuse learners about the opportunities that are available in the industry.

Learners rightly value and enjoy the very extensive range of additional activities available to them. They take part in community-based projects, skills competitions and overseas trips. For example, animal management learners participate in a rhino conservation project in Africa. They collect and analyse data, working with a professional research team. As a result, learners understand how their classroom learning is applied in practice and appreciate working with people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Learners grow in confidence and resilience while at BCoT due to the sensible action that leaders and teachers take when planning the curriculum and the support that they provide. For example, learners in IT grow in confidence as a result of regularly giving presentations to their peers. Learners also rightly appreciate the counselling services and college nurse available to them. They also recognise that their growing confidence is linked to the skills and knowledge they gain. For example, learners with high needs studying barbering rightly recognise and are proud of their progress and achievements. Learners also participate in useful personal development sessions, in which they gain an insight into topics such as the risks from radicalisation and extremism, equality and diversity, British values and healthy, age-appropriate relationships.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders invest significant time and energy developing and maintaining successful relationships with a wide range of stakeholders. They work with organisations such as Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Hampshire County Council (HCC) and the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to share intelligence and identify and address skills gaps swiftly. For example, leaders worked with the LEP to create a facility to address emerging skills needs in maintaining hybrid and electric vehicles.

Leaders and teachers work closely with stakeholders to design and teach programmes. They develop the content and plan the order in which it is taught so that learners acquire the skills and knowledge valued by stakeholders. For example, leaders worked with HCC to adapt the teaching assistant apprenticeship to include a qualification on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This ensured that teaching assistants were able to better support children with a range of additional needs. Stakeholders also play a role in supporting learners to acquire new skills and knowledge. For instance, leaders work with a local university to arrange guest speakers and visits for game design learners that extend their learning and prepare them for university well.

Leaders and governors have a close understanding of how they contribute to addressing skills needs. For instance, they rightly recognise the positive impact they had working with HCC to create the Future Skills Centre to support the development of construction skills in an area of significant housing expansion. They also appreciate how changes in the curriculum have helped adult learners who speak English as an additional language to succeed in the social care sector by developing language skills tailored closely to employers' needs.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is closely aligned to the college's values and that offers programmes to meet learners', employers' and community needs well. Leaders use their extensive stakeholder network to inform future developments very effectively. For example, leaders collaborate with other further education providers to agree curriculum plans, minimising duplication across the area. This ensures that learners have a rich choice of courses.

Leaders and teachers plan the curriculum carefully, enabling learners to acquire a secure understanding of the core aspects of the subject before moving on to more complex concepts. For example, automotive maintenance learners initially learn about health and safety and customer relations, before moving on to more technically challenging content.

Leaders work with partners skilfully to implement ambitious adult learning programmes that are designed carefully so that learners quickly acquire skills and knowledge valued by employers and higher education providers. For example, following discussion with clinical professionals, leaders added further clinical skills to the access to medicine and medical sciences HE diploma curriculum so that learners are prepared well for their subsequent training. The comprehensive distance learning offer that leaders have introduced allows learners to access education who might otherwise struggle to do so. Adult learners gain the knowledge they need for work, at a time and place convenient to them. Leaders use their funding effectively to provide adult learners with high-quality resources, such as clinical skills laboratories and healthcare simulation suites, so that learners develop current industry standard skills. Consequently, most adult learners make very good progress while at college and achieve highly.

Most teachers are qualified industry experts who use their knowledge skilfully to plan lessons well. They break complex topics down into more easily understood components and use digital resources to support learning very effectively. For example, animal management teachers show videos on pathogens, during which learners identify the key terminology. Learners then build on this by defining each term and identifying the different types of pathogen. Consequently, learners find their lessons interesting, they participate in them well and subsequently most pass their qualifications.

Teachers help learners commit learning to their long-term memory by frequently asking learners to complete tasks that draw on previous learning. For example, in beauty therapy, teachers ask learners about the adverse reactions associated with treatments such as hair removal, helping learners to develop a strong understanding of the physiological concepts that underpin beauty treatments. As a result, learners, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), make good progress in their learning.

Teachers support learners to develop their skills in mathematics and English effectively. Teachers skilfully encourage learners to apply these subjects in their vocational lessons. For instance, adult learners on the access to medicine and medical sciences HE diploma develop their use of mathematics during study skills sessions and then apply it in chemistry lessons. Consequently, learners develop their skill and confidence in the use of English and mathematics well.

Most teachers check learners' understanding carefully. For example, in travel and tourism, teachers use role play successfully to check learners' proficiency as aircraft cabin crew in a simulated aeroplane fuselage. Most teachers provide learners with feedback that celebrates their achievements and helps them understand how to improve their future work. In public services, teachers highlight sections of marked work with associated comments that learners rightly find helpful. However, a small number of teachers do not provide sufficient feedback to enable learners to understand how to improve their work.

Leaders work with employers to develop and tailor apprenticeship programmes so that apprentices develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours closely aligned to their job role. For example, leaders work with a large employer to select and order the content of the curriculum on the maintenance operations engineering technician apprenticeship. Staff assess apprentices' prior knowledge and skills carefully before starting their programme and use this information to devise sensible assessment and review points. Staff track apprentices' progress carefully and help them catch up if they fall behind. As a result, most apprentices develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours that they apply in their workplace well.

Leaders have designed an accessible and ambitious curriculum for high needs learners. They have created the future pathways programme, which is coherently planned to enable high needs learners to develop their skills and knowledge and move on to higher level learning. High needs learners within the foundation curriculum are supported well by qualified, experienced staff. However, a small number of high needs learners do not receive the support they require in vocational lessons or to prepare them for adult life. Consequently, they make slower progress achieving autonomy and independence in their studies and wider life. Most high needs learners are successful in their learning, achieve their qualifications and go on to further study or work in line with their peers.

Staff provide learners with comprehensive information, advice and guidance on their future work and study options, such as through guest speakers or the college's careers team. Most learners on programmes for young people take part in work-related activities and work experience with employers that help develop their employability skills and inform their future career choices well. However, in a small number of areas, learners do not participate in high-quality work placements linked to their programme of study. This limits these learners' opportunity to further hone and develop their employability and vocational skills.

Most learners are successful in their course, developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They achieve their qualifications and are well prepared for their next steps in learning or work. Consequently, nearly all move on to further education, employment or training. However, leaders rightly recognise that pass rates for young people studying GCSE mathematics and for adult learners studying functional skills at the subcontractor are too low.

Leaders have a sharp focus on the quality of teaching and learning. They regularly visit lessons and give feedback that helps teachers improve their future work. Leaders support teachers' development well through a comprehensive range of training activities. These include teachers returning to industry for sabbaticals or work shadowing activities to help them update their vocational and technical skills. Leaders are supportive of their staff and their well-being. For instance, they provide focused sessions on topics such as mental health and menopause and provide access to further support such as counselling where required.

Governors have a good understanding of the college, the community it services and their role, including their statutory duties. They use their diverse expertise and

experience to provide valuable scrutiny and support to senior leaders. Governors play an effective role supporting leaders in the continuous improvement of the quality of learning and the experience learners benefit from while at the college.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise the safety and well-being of learners. Appropriately trained and experienced designated safeguarding staff work very effectively with external partner organisations to maintain a comprehensive understanding of the issues in the local area. They use well-planned safeguarding training to ensure staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding issues and how to raise concerns. Consequently, staff help learners know how to keep safe from issues such as unhealthy relationships, knife crime and people trafficking.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are conducted before staff start work with learners.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that a greater proportion of learners on programmes for young people benefit from high-quality, meaningful work placements.
- Leaders should ensure that learners with high needs are more supported to develop the skills they need for adult life.
- Leaders should ensure that all learners receive feedback that enables them to improve their work and achieve high grades.
- Leaders should ensure that a greater proportion of young people studying GCSE mathematics and adult learners studying functional skills with the subcontractor achieve well on their programme.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130688
Address	Worting Road Basingstoke Hampshire RG21 8TN
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Website	www.bcot.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Anthony Bravo
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	3–6 May 2016
Main subcontractors	West Berkshire Training Consortium

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal curriculum performance and innovation, 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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