

Inspection of South Hampshire College Group

Inspection dates:

29 April to 2 May 2025

Overall effectiveness**Good**

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

In 2023, Fareham College, Eastleigh College and Southampton College merged to form South Hampshire College Group. The group is comprised of three colleges, the Centre of Excellence in Engineering, Manufacturing and Advanced Skills Training (CEMAST) and the Civil Engineering Training Centre (CETC), both at Lee-on-the-Solent. Leaders offer technical and vocational courses from entry level to level 5 and apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5.

At the time of inspection, there were approximately 3,800 learners on education programmes for young people. Most studied at levels 2 and 3, including across a range of T levels. There were approximately 8,900 adult learners, studying face-to-face and online courses such as English and mathematics, and access to higher education courses. A large proportion of adult learners studied English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

There were approximately 1,390 apprentices in learning, with around half training at level 3 in construction and engineering. Approximately one-quarter of apprentices studied at level 2, mainly in construction and the service industries. There were 158

learners with high needs, 105 of which studied in technical and vocational courses and 53 studied in specialist provision.

College leaders work with 10 subcontractors, who provide education and training that complements the provision offered by the group. These include health and social care courses for adult learners to study online, as well as education for learners to prepare them for careers in the uniformed public services.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy the inclusive culture leaders and staff have created. They value differences in people and accept people for who they are. They behave professionally and treat others with respect.

Learners on education programmes for young people have positive attitudes to their studies. They are motivated to learn and so attend their vocational education and training well. Learners do not attend their GCSE English and mathematics lessons at the same high rate. Learners make good progress and develop new knowledge and skills quickly and confidently. Learners apply these skills competently and so can complete increasingly complex activities and tasks. In T-level education and early years at Fareham College, learners develop their understanding of children's linguistic development. They then refine this understanding while on work placement to help children whose first language is not English to develop their communication skills.

Leaders have designed the adult learning provision to be highly responsive to the individual needs of learners. Adult learners become increasingly confident and empowered by their learning, which they use in their personal and work lives, and to the benefit of their communities. Adult learners studying ESOL courses at Southampton College use their new knowledge to write letters to their MPs about local issues. Leaders have carefully organised the timetable to account for adult learners' often complex professional responsibilities and personal commitments. As a result, most adult learners attend well and engage positively with their learning. Most adult learners achieve their learning goals, pass their qualifications and progress positively. There are areas of the curriculum where adult learners do less well. Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve these areas, but it is too soon to assess the full impact.

Apprentices value the expert training and guidance they receive from experienced and knowledgeable staff. They benefit from high-quality, industry-standard resources and workspaces. Apprentices participate in helpful tutorials that are suitably contextualised for their workplace and sector. Apprentices enjoy opportunities to participate in skills competitions. Most apprentices complete their training in the time planned. Staff have put in place logical plans to help those apprentices who are beyond their planned end date complete their apprenticeships quickly.

Learners with high needs develop their personal, social and vocational skills successfully. They grow in confidence to speak with new people and develop strategies to regulate their behaviours. They learn the skills needed for independent living, such as how to use equipment safely when cooking. Managers of specialist provision have designed induction and familiarisation activities with employers so that learners with high needs move on to supported internships successfully.

Through the college's well-structured tutorial programme, learners and apprentices gain from valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of fundamental British values, which they exemplify in their daily lives. Learners and apprentices

benefit from a wide range of opportunities that enrich their experience at college and beyond. At Fareham College, learners on level 3 creative media work with the police to create videos about the dangers of drink driving. In level 1 health and social care, learners work in partnership with a local community charity to run a dementia cafe.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe at college, work and online. Most learners and apprentices recall staff discussing the risks of extremist views and remember the important information they have been told.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work in close partnership with employers and stakeholders and so have a comprehensive understanding of the region's skills needs. Working with the local authority, the Chamber of Commerce, employer representative bodies and other key stakeholders, leaders have been instrumental in shaping and advancing the local skills improvement planning. In response, they have proactively developed the college curriculum, particularly to make sure that courses in engineering, health, maritime and construction help learners and apprentices develop relevant and up-to-date knowledge and skills. For instance, in collaboration with Southampton City Council, the Department for Work and Pensions and other community partners, leaders have increased provision in foundation learning, level 1 courses and in ESOL, so more learners can acquire essential skills they need for work and thereby reduce unemployment in the area.

Leaders, managers and staff work very effectively with employers and stakeholders to plan and teach the curriculum. In engineering courses at the CEMAST, staff working with the local NHS trust and a heart health charity have devised projects for learners to produce 3D-printed models of infant hearts for cardiac surgeons to practise surgery techniques on. In creative media at Fareham College, staff have a partnership with Solent University so that level 3 students use professional standard outside broadcast equipment. In culinary skills at Southampton College, local chefs demonstrate alternative cooking techniques and explain the environmental and cost benefits of using produce from local suppliers. Through these types of experiences, learners deepen further their understanding of the demands of work in the subjects they study and develop the skills they will need.

Leaders and managers collaborate successfully with stakeholders to design curriculums, particularly those that benefit disadvantaged learners. Managers at Eastleigh College and Southampton College, working with the King's Trust, have designed courses for learners in the region at risk of disengaging with education, employment or training. Leaders work successfully with subcontractors to offer courses that help disengaged learners develop routines and positive behaviours that they need to work in public services.

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

Following the merger of Fareham College, Eastleigh College and Southampton College, leaders have transformed the quality of provision across the group. They have focused keenly on raising the quality of education and training for both learners and apprentices, including those enrolled through subcontracted provision. They have established centres of excellence and secured the long-term provision of technical and vocational education in Southampton. Leaders have made significant investments to modernise college environments and equip them with industry-standard resources, which enhance learners' and apprentices' learning experience. To drive continuous improvement, leaders have introduced helpful leadership training for managers, and a range of training for staff to strengthen their teaching and technical expertise.

Staff plan and sequence the order of learning and training logically so that learners and apprentices build their knowledge and skills securely over time. Staff provide plentiful opportunities for learners and apprentices to consolidate and apply their learning. At CETC, level 2 engineering apprentices use their groundworks skills in different situations such as housing developments, schools and helicopter crash training facilities. In practical subjects, including those with work placements, staff ensure that learners develop the skills they need to complete increasingly complex tasks. At Fareham College, level 3 creative media learners are taught the theoretical principles of cinematography and camera operation. As they progress into Year 2, learners use this knowledge to plan, film and edit skilfully. They then evaluate this work carefully to improve further.

Highly knowledgeable teachers draw on their expertise to enhance their teaching. They use their experience to clarify concepts and provide meaningful examples, which helps engage learners and apprentices while deepening their understanding. For instance, in level 3 dental nursing at Eastleigh College, teachers use their experience to deepen adult learners' understanding of how to detect oral cancer. On occasion, industry specialists enhance learners' and apprentices' knowledge when they provide guest lectures and masterclasses. In level 2 culinary skills at Southampton College, local chefs demonstrate how to use contemporary ingredients such as seaweed-derived setting agents when making vegan desserts. Learners and apprentices are equipped with the up-to-date knowledge and techniques they need for their industries. Many teachers maintain their sector experience through 'back to industry' days.

Teachers mostly explain important concepts clearly and demonstrate practical skills with care and precision. On the level 3 installation and maintenance electrician apprenticeship at Eastleigh College, teachers demonstrate how to measure and cut accurately when fitting conduits. Across the three colleges and in a very small number of subjects, teachers do not give instruction or explain concepts clearly enough.

Teachers mostly provide learners with helpful feedback on their work. In level 2 beauty at Eastleigh College, teachers explain to learners during client sessions how they can improve their technical skills so they can work at industry speeds. In level 3 creative media at Fareham College, staff frequently refer to the qualification grading criteria, so learners know what they need to do to achieve a merit or distinction grade. Learners act on the advice their teachers provide and improve their work as a result.

Learners with high needs make good progress in their academic, vocational and personal development. Those enrolled in education programmes for young people benefit from effective support and guidance, enabling them to achieve outcomes in line with their peers. Due to the high expectations set by well-trained specialist staff, learners on specialist programmes at level 1 or below become increasingly independent and acquire essential life skills. Staff closely monitor the progress of learners with education, health and care plans, and make sure they remain on track to meet their individual targets.

A high proportion of learners on education programmes for young people achieve their qualifications and often achieve merit and distinction grades. Most adult learners achieve their learning goals and/or qualifications. Where they do not, leaders have taken decisive action to change or make improvements to provision. Most learners progress to positive destinations in further learning or employment.

The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has increased. Leaders have significantly reduced the number of apprentices who are beyond their planned training duration by closely monitoring progress, providing additional training and workplace visits, and enhancing employers' understanding of apprenticeship requirements. These improvements are sustainable. In a small number of courses, staff do not use progress reviews well enough and these apprentices do not understand the progress they are making, nor how to improve.

Most learners and apprentices benefit from effective careers advice and experiences. Most young learners have encounters with the world of work, including through employer-set briefs, work experience and guest speakers. Staff partner with a local university to prepare learners for interviews and provide advice on managing money. As a result, learners and apprentices can make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

Governors use their wealth of experience to support and challenge leaders effectively. They scrutinise the performance of the curriculums carefully to improve the quality of education, training and facilities. They focus closely on the impact of the merger and contribute valuably to the strategic direction of the group. Governors have helped leaders transform the culture of the group positively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Reduce the number of apprentices that have gone beyond the time expected to complete their apprenticeship.
- Improve young learners' attendance to GCSE English and mathematics lessons.
- Ensure that staff use progress reviews so that apprentices know the progress they are making and how to improve.
- Ensure that teachers give consistently clear instructions and explanations of concepts in their teaching.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130693
Address	Bishopsfield Road Fareham Hampshire PO14 1NH
Contact number	01329815200
Website	www.shcg.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Andrew Kaye
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	The Skills Network Learning Curve Military Mentors Strive Training Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire Authority

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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