

Inspection of Southport and King George V Sixth Form College

Inspection dates: 11–14 February 2020

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	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

On 31 January 2018, Southport College (SC) merged with King George V sixth-form college (KGV). The college has two sites, both in the centre of Southport. The SC site in Mornington Road provides a wide range of vocational and technical qualifications for young people and adults. The KGV site provides academic and vocational level 3 programmes exclusively for young people. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,433 learners aged 16 to 18, nearly half of whom were studying at level 3. Of the 1,136 adults, more than half were studying at level 1. There were 446 apprentices, more than half of whom were studying at advanced level. The college receives high-needs funding for 35 learners. The largest subject areas are health, public services and care; science and mathematics; business, administration and law; and arts and media. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy a wide range of courses that meet local and regional needs very well. This helps to ensure that most learners and apprentices who stay on their courses progress to higher levels of study or work.

Learners and apprentices told us that they benefit from a very caring and highly inclusive learning environment, and inspectors agreed. Relationships between them and their teachers and assessors are excellent.

In classrooms and around the college, learners demonstrate excellent conduct and show respect for each other. They engage in learning, work constructively with their peers and take pride in their achievements. Most apprentices model and adopt professional behaviours. Learners and apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the correct health and safety practices while they are at college or in work.

Learners and apprentices benefit from using industry-standard equipment. This helps them to develop practical skills which are valued by employers. For example, teachers in engineering have introduced new equipment so that apprentices can mill and turn parts to a high industry standard.

Learners participate in a range of activities linked to their ambitious career goals. For example, motor vehicle apprentices visit a well-known truck-assembly plant to enrich their knowledge and experience about the industry. Teachers and assessors are effective in supporting learners to progress to further study or employment. For example, A-level learners develop the independent thinking and problem-solving skills they will need in higher education.

Learners who have high needs and/or special educational needs and/or disabilities receive early help and individual support. As a result, learners who have difficulty interacting with others become more socially aware and more able to interact with their peers and teachers. This helps them to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Adults' confidence improves as a result of the support they receive from teachers. They appreciate the opportunities given to them to deepen their knowledge and skills and take advantage of the drop-in sessions offered by staff. For example, adults on access to higher education courses deepen their understanding of science through individual and meaningful research projects.

Most learners and apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful. For example, hairdressing apprentices become progressively more confident and improve their ability to communicate with clients.

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

Leaders make good use of a range of local and regional resources to inform and shape the curriculum offer. They tailor programmes to meet the needs of learners, employers and the priorities of local enterprise partnerships.

The curriculum for learners who receive high-needs funding is well designed to help them acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours which enrich their lives and their employment possibilities.

Managers involve employers in planning the curriculum. As a consequence, apprentices develop specialist work skills in areas of expertise where shortages have been identified. For example, the curriculum has been revised to include gas training to enable engineering apprentices to work on boilers.

Most learners and apprentices receive high-quality information, advice and guidance. For example, in art and media, learners are interviewed by specialist teachers to ensure that they are fully informed about their choice of course, and that it is matched to their individual needs and career aspirations.

Most teachers set high expectations for what learners can achieve. For example, teachers on the access to higher education course for science prepare learners well to study zoology, podiatry and medicine. Learners benefit from opportunities that extend their knowledge and skills beyond the requirements of the qualification. For example, learners on level 2 art and design elect to join life-drawing classes to improve their drawing skills and develop different techniques.

Most teachers use the information they collect on learners' starting points to plan learning activities carefully to reinforce knowledge. They check understanding and allow them time to practise, review and recall their learning. For example, on the level 2 media course, learners consolidate their knowledge by practising foley techniques and embedding these into their radio drama productions.

Most teachers successfully address any misconceptions in learners' subject knowledge. They encourage learners to develop their understanding through skilful questioning and by checking learners' understanding of key concepts. For example, teachers of A-level biology use a variety of assessment methods to check learners' understanding. They use this information to adapt what they are doing in the classroom and address any knowledge gaps effectively.

Teachers on the access to higher education course for science ensure that adults remember more about the structure and function of joints and ligaments as they deepen their knowledge when they conduct dissections.

Most learners and apprentices receive useful feedback from their teachers and assessors. This allows them to reflect on their learning and identify how they can improve further. For example, sociology A-level learners edit their previous work to improve their grades.

In a small number of instances, teachers do not provide feedback that challenges learners to broaden their understanding. For example, health and social care level 3 learners describe models of healthcare and teachers do not challenge them to evaluate how effective these are.

In a few subject areas, such as engineering and health and care apprenticeships and GCSE English and mathematics for adults, teachers do not plan ambitious enough curriculums. Teachers in these subjects do not identify well enough the gaps in apprentices' and learners' knowledge and deliver the curriculum to build on what they already know. Consequently, not all apprentices and learners improve their understanding to a high enough level.

Most young people and adults achieve their qualification, but too many apprentices do not achieve their apprenticeships, usually because they leave early. Learners and apprentices who remain on their courses gain self-confidence. They develop new skills and knowledge which enable them to progress to higher-level study or into work.

Learners who have high needs and study vocational courses develop the skills they need for work and independence. For example, in motor vehicle, learners with high needs get extra support to develop their proficiency in maintaining vehicles.

Employers value the new skills and knowledge that apprentices gain. For example, assessors introduced new colour techniques into the curriculum for hairdressing apprentices, so that they learn up-to-date techniques.

Learners recognise the importance of English and mathematics, and develop these important skills within their vocational programmes. For example, learners on art courses use volume calculations to accurately mix paints.

Most young people enjoy a range of useful activities that complement their programmes and develop them as individuals. For example, high-needs learners undertake internships and successfully move into work. A-level learners are well prepared to enter university. Apprentices further refine their skills. For example, engineering apprentices take part in skills competitions.

Attendance in most of the classes visited by inspectors was high. In a minority of English and mathematics classes for adults and off-the-job training sessions for apprentices, the attendance is low.

The senior leadership of the college is very effective. Senior leaders have developed and implemented a clear strategy that has resulted in a sustained quality of education across the merged institution. Managers have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that there are clear progression routes for learners and apprentices. They have ensured that most learners have access to an ambitious curriculum.

Teachers and assessors are well qualified in the subjects that they teach and have considerable vocational experience. Staff morale is high and most teachers and assessors feel valued. Leaders provide support and opportunities for staff to develop

their subject expertise. For example, teachers in functional skills are well prepared for the curriculum changes in this subject area. Teachers receive effective coaching to make improvements to their teaching when necessary.

Governors make a valuable contribution to the oversight and the effectiveness of the college. They hold the senior leadership team to account effectively. They bring relevant and specific skills which assist the senior leadership team to bring about changes to the curriculum and make the improvements needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Designated safeguarding officers are appropriately trained to carry out their duties effectively. They have a good understanding of local issues related to safeguarding. They ensure that all staff receive regular updates and training.

Leaders and managers practise safe recruitment. They gather relevant information so as to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

Staff deal with safeguarding concerns swiftly and effectively. They refer to external agencies where appropriate and follow up on actions to reach the appropriate resolution.

Learners and apprentices feel safe in their learning environments and at work. They do not have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all teachers on adult English and mathematics courses plan a sufficiently demanding curriculum that challenges learners to achieve high grades in their qualifications.
- Ensure that the curriculum for apprentices, particularly those in engineering and health and social care, develops their knowledge, skills and behaviours quickly.
- Ensure that adult learners on English and mathematics courses and apprentices in engineering attend their courses regularly.
- Ensure that learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of radicalisation and extremism and how it applies to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130491
Address	Mornington Road Southport Merseyside PR9 0TT
Contact number	01704 500 606
Website	http://www.southport.ac.uk/
Principal/CEO	John Clarke
Provider type	GFE/SFC
Date of previous inspection	11 March 2013
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous merged college monitoring visit report. The inspection was carried out using the 2019 further education and skills inspection handbook and took into account all relevant provision offered by 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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