

# Inspection of Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College

Inspection dates: 13 to 16 May 2025

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College is a general further education college that formed in August 2024 following the merger of Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College. It provides education programmes for young people, courses for adults, apprenticeships and courses for learners with high needs.

There are two campuses in Weymouth. At the larger of these, leaders provide a wide range of courses, including A levels and vocational courses in subjects such as engineering, hospitality and health and social care. At the smaller adult learning centre, courses are offered in English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The Kingston Maurward campus in Dorchester focuses primarily on land-based courses, including agriculture and animal management, as well as a few other courses such as construction and uniformed public services. Courses for learners with high needs are provided at the main Weymouth campus and the Kingston Maurward campus in subjects such as preparation for work and foundations for learning and life.

At the time of the inspection, 2,087 learners were studying on education programmes for young people, with just under half studying at level 3. Of these, 52 were on T-level courses. The college has 330 learners studying adult learning courses across 15 subject areas, with the largest numbers in ESOL and mathematics.

The college has 295 apprentices across 30 different apprenticeships, with just over half studying at level 3. Most apprentices are over 19 years old. The largest numbers are in construction subjects.

Weymouth and Kingston Maurward college has 300 learners with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Of these, 188 study vocational and academic courses and 112 study on courses specifically designed for learners with high needs.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy their time at college. They attend well and are almost always punctual to lessons. They behave well and are respectful, polite and articulate. Apprentices conduct themselves professionally in their workplaces. For example, hairdressing apprentices work well with clients because they have been taught professional behaviours that prepare them for the workplace. Staff have high expectations of learners and apprentices. They swiftly challenge any inappropriate behaviour or language on the rare occasions that it happens.

Staff create a calm and focused learning environment where learners and apprentices can concentrate on their education and contribute well to lessons. Learners experience a positive and supportive culture, where staff know their learners and apprentices well. Lecturers successfully promote learners' and apprentices' engagement in lessons and encourage productive relationship with peers.

Lecturers and support staff provide effective support for learners with high needs and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their support contributes to ensuring that these learners make progress at least in line with their peers.

Learners and apprentices develop and maintain a positive attitude towards their learning. This helps them develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, learners on the early years T-level course acquire an understanding of theories and how to apply this knowledge when developing activity plans, adapting them for different needs. These include how to support safe sleep and methods of dealing with different behaviours. Because of this, learners and apprentices become ready for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Lecturers and other staff help learners and apprentices with their well-being and develop their confidence and resilience. For example, in level 1 childcare, staff have created a summer transition programme where they identify students at interview who may be anxious. These new learners start a week earlier than other learners to familiarise themselves with the new surroundings, meet key staff and meet other students. This helps them manage their anxiety and develop an understanding of what college life will be like, in preparation for their studies.

Learners and apprentices have access to valuable careers advice and guidance through a dedicated careers team. Younger learners receive effective support in tutorial lessons. For example, learners on A-level courses get help with their university applications. On adult learning courses, learners value appointments with qualified and experienced careers advisers, who assist them with CV writing and developing employability skills. Learners on education programmes for young people, and those on courses specifically designed for learners with high needs, take part in meaningful work experience and placements, as well as work-related activities. These opportunities help them apply their knowledge in the workplace and prepare them for future careers.

Leaders have put in place suitable safeguarding measures, such as lanyards and security staff, which help learners and apprentices feel safe in college. Learners know who to contact and would be confident to do so. They rightly believe that staff will deal with any concerns swiftly and sensitively.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

College leaders are very effectively and actively involved in local and regional decision-making. They play a crucial role in identifying, shaping and achieving the area's skills priorities. They are valued partners to the various organisations they collaborate with. This is because of their comprehensive understanding of the region's diverse industries and economic development needs.

College staff maintain a strong collaborative relationship with local stakeholders, which includes the local Chamber of Commerce, the Dorset Skills Board and the councils of Dorset and Weymouth. They also work closely with headteachers and teaching staff from local primary and secondary schools. The college's governing body is very well informed about the community's skills needs and plays a significant role in developing strategies. This is because of the board's composition, which includes several senior-level representatives from various local organisations.

Leaders have designed curriculums that are highly valued by employers. Learners acquire the up-to-date knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to become well-informed practitioners. For example, leaders have developed structured farming curriculums from level 1 to 3 and have introduced T levels in crop and livestock production. Extensive investment in resources has ensured that learners have access to both traditional and advanced farming equipment. Learners gain practical, relevant skills in a safe and controlled live commercial farming environment.

Stakeholders frequently influence the content, timing and organisation of the college's curriculum. For instance, the close partnership between college staff and a local advanced engineering company ensures that the apprenticeship curriculum effectively meets the needs of both employers and apprentices. This includes developing competencies in hand tools and bench work skills, as well as operating modern CNC machines to ultrafine tolerances. Additionally, curriculum leaders and teachers have successfully worked with Dorset Council to plan and teach adult functional skills and employability courses.

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

Since the college was established at the start of this academic year, leaders, managers, governors and staff have worked swiftly to establish a collaborative culture that firmly places learners at the forefront of every decision they make. They have successfully overcome challenges faced as a consequence of the merger,

demonstrating utmost integrity and resilience and working cohesively as a team to find a positive route forward.

Leaders and managers ensure that the curriculums they provide are ambitious for all learners, including those with high needs and SEND. They have carefully chosen and developed appropriate curriculums that equip learners and apprentices with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to succeed.

Leaders and managers effectively identify opportunities to enhance curriculums to meet the employment and skills needs of local and regional communities that they serve. For example, they have introduced a foundation diploma in agriculture. This course provides learners who have not yet achieved grade 4 or higher in GCSE English and/or mathematics with additional time to study these subjects, preparing them well for future courses and employment.

Lecturers plan their curriculums in a logical sequence, allowing learners to gradually build their knowledge and skills over time. For example, in level 3 equine studies, the curriculum is designed with the seasonality of competitions and horse management in mind. As a result, tack and equipment assessments are planned for autumn to enhance their practical application throughout the rest of the year. Horse presentation assessments are scheduled for spring to align with the start of outdoor competitions.

Lecturers have expert knowledge of the subjects they teach and effective teaching skills. The methods that they use, such as demonstrations, probing questioning and clear explanations help learners grasp and use key concepts. Lecturers check learners' and apprentices' understanding swiftly, enabling them to identify and correct misconceptions quickly, which then helps to inform future teaching.

Lecturers mostly provide learners and apprentices with comprehensive feedback on their work. For example, on creative media courses, lecturers use written and audio recorded feedback to carefully describe to students the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. However, on a few courses, feedback tends to focus more on the tasks and activities that learners need to complete, rather than on the improvement or reinforcement of new knowledge and skills. In some cases, lecturers do not identify spelling and grammar mistakes, leading learners to repeat these errors.

Apprenticeship staff mostly work well with employers to ensure that most apprentices receive strong support in their on-the-job and off-the-job training. For example, on the level 2 professional hairdressing apprenticeship, lecturers work closely with hair salon employers to assess apprentices' progress. This relationship helps identify on-the-job training and activities that allow apprentices to practise and refine their new knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, in a few cases, employer involvement is less effective because of weaker progress reviews. As a result, a few apprentices and their employers are unclear about what is needed in their on-the-job training to enhance their knowledge and skills. Consequently, these

apprentices take their end test before they are ready, which has led to failures at their first attempt.

Leaders and managers have designed courses for learners with high needs that successfully prepare them for their next steps. Courses focus on progression to further study, employment and independence. Managers have developed a successful approach to using EHC plans to ensure learners are enrolled on the most suitable programmes. The curriculum is varied and flexible to suit the needs of individual learners. Where appropriate, this includes qualifications which are suitable for progression. Most learners with high needs are successful on their courses and progress to positive next steps in education and employment.

Leaders and managers have planned a useful curriculum to support adult learners who need to improve their basic skills, including in English, mathematics and employability. Leaders work closely with Jobcentre Plus staff to identify and enrol learners who are most in need of these courses. Most adult learners improve their knowledge and skills and increase in confidence.

Staff successfully help learners to understand what it is like to live in modern Britain. For example, the college-wide tutorial programme enables younger learners to gain an understanding of British values. Staff encourage learners to reflect on democratic freedoms and the rule of law. Learners welcome the opportunity to have open discussions, and they become more confident in challenging discrimination based on ethnicity and gender. Learners are encouraged to speak openly and explore their thoughts in these lessons and find this helpful for their learning. Lecturers teach learners and apprentices about risks associated with extremist views and how they may become more vulnerable to radicalisation. However, a few younger learners cannot remember what they have been taught about these topics.

Those responsible for governance bring diverse and valuable expertise to their roles. They have backgrounds in further education, primary and secondary education, financial services, retail, apprenticeships and land-based education. Their expertise enriches planning and decision-making and ensures that the college benefits from a well-rounded strategic approach. Since the new college was formed, governors have been appropriately critical and supportive, actively challenging the leadership team while maintaining a focus on the college's vision and values.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Provide all learners and apprentices with feedback that helps them to improve.
- Ensure that the apprenticeship curriculum integrates on- and off-the-job training well so that all apprentices make good progress.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130653
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Website	<a href="http://www.weymouth.ac.uk">www.weymouth.ac.uk</a>
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Kate Wills
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee, and the head of curriculum and skills as the skills nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent position statement and development plans. 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

Steve Battersby, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Alexander	His Majesty's Inspector
Christine Lacey	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Attfield	Ofsted Inspector
Chloe Rendall	His Majesty's Inspector
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