

Inspection of Shrewsbury Colleges Group

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 March 2025

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

Information about this provider

Shrewsbury Colleges Group is a designated sixth-form college based in Shropshire. It operates from three campuses, English Bridge and Welsh Bridge in the centre of Shrewsbury and London Road. The college offers a broad range of academic, vocational, professional and technical education from level 1 to higher education courses.

At the time of inspection, there were 4,152 students aged 16 to 18, 176 students with high needs, 686 apprentices and 1,711 adults studying at the college. Most students aged 16 to 18 study academic and vocational courses at level 3. This includes 234 students studying T-level courses. Over two-thirds of students with high needs study vocational and academic courses. The remaining students study foundation courses specifically designed for them, a small number of which are taught by a subcontractor. Apprentices study a range of courses from levels 2 to 5, with the majority at levels 2 and 3. Adult students study on courses from level 1 to level 4, some of which are taught flexibly and online. The college works with three subcontractors.

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

Students and apprentices benefit from a calm, purposeful and positive learning environment. Teachers and staff are committed to supporting students and driving and inspiring students to achieve the highest possible grades. Most students rise to this, achieve their qualifications and progress into further or higher education or employment.

Students and apprentices are highly motivated to succeed. They behave impeccably well and are enthusiastic about their learning. Students, particularly on academic courses, are hardworking and develop strong independent learning skills, which enables them to achieve the highest grades and be successful following their studies.

Students with high needs studying foundation learning courses improve their confidence and resilience and learn to overcome their anxieties. They gain critical skills for adulthood, such as cooking meals, money management and independent travel. They work in groups and learn to socialise more comfortably with their peers across the college as a result of involvement in pan-disability football, trips to the cinema and visits to a wide range of employers.

Adult students are very well supported throughout their studies. Teachers sensitively support often undiagnosed individual learning needs such as dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism with skill. Adult learning courses are planned flexibly and are often taught both in the evening and during the day. When students miss a lesson, a wide range of resources are available for them to catch up, including the opportunity to attend an alternative day or evening class. As a result, most students achieve their qualifications and their goals for career progression. They are rightly proud of their achievements.

Students develop into responsible and active citizens because of the wide and rich experience provided alongside their studies. They lead local community events, such as litter picks, raise money for breast cancer awareness and participate in activities for World Mental Health Day. Level 2 painting and decorating students work to improve the decoration in local community facilities, practising their work skills as well as supporting their community.

Students and apprentices benefit from high-quality teaching resources which frequently replicate work environments. These help students develop the workplace behaviours, as well as skills, needed to be successful. T-level health students have access to a simulated ward, including interactive medical mannequins, enabling them to practise skills such as fitting catheters and drawing blood. They can rapidly put new knowledge into practice in the classroom.

Students are respectful of each other and their teachers. They embrace individual differences, listen and contribute sensitively to challenging discussions in class and are confident that bullying and harassment are never tolerated. They understand

how to keep themselves safe, including using safe routes away from the river during floods.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a very comprehensive understanding of local, regional and national skills needs. They are steadfast in their desire to provide an extensive curriculum offer that meets skills priorities and supports the acquisition of highly relevant skills and knowledge for all their students and apprentices. For instance, leaders have introduced higher-level modular courses in priority areas such as engineering, construction, digital and leadership and management. Through their supported internships, leaders enable young people with an education and health care plan to move into meaningful and rewarding jobs.

Leaders have highly effective and useful links with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, such as local NHS health trusts, the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and the Greater London Authority. They collaborate exceptionally well with an extensive range of employers and other relevant stakeholders to support the recruitment and retention of skilled staff and to meet skills gaps in trades such as bricklaying, carpentry and construction.

Leaders are committed to providing curriculums that meet the exacting needs of both students and local businesses in sectors such as plumbing, painting, digital and construction. They have excellent relationships with a wide range of employers and respond incisively to their specific skills priorities. For example, teachers in plumbing and heating teach about renewable energies, such as air source heat pumps, and teachers in motor vehicle include content about electric and hybrid cars in their curriculums. Leaders work very closely with trade unions to provide engaging courses for adults who need bespoke training to become successful trade union representatives. They partner with universities to provide higher-level training in areas such as hospitality, counselling, gaming and teacher training. These partnerships provide excellent opportunities for students to access higher education training close to where they live.

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

Leaders, managers and staff are deeply committed and ambitious for the success of their students and apprentices. Staff take into account students' specific needs when planning and designing curriculums. Staff are empowered and encouraged by supportive managers to improve their work continually through rigorous collaborative quality processes. This ensures a culture of high standards in teaching and high aspirations for student outcomes. Staff celebrate the exceptional achievements of their students and apprentices.

Leaders have designed highly ambitious curriculums that go beyond the requirements of the qualifications to ensure students and apprentices develop the specific skills needed for their next steps. Level 3 engineering technician apprentices learn to use a wide range of testing equipment in bespoke testing bays and experience robot welders and the use of 3-D printing to enhance their knowledge and skills. A-level psychology students develop the research methods and complex statistical analysis skills needed for their future study at university.

Leaders and teachers ensure that curriculums are planned and sequenced well so students and apprentices develop their skills and knowledge. A-level students start their learning over the summer prior to enrolment, so they are well prepared for their courses. Adult students studying trade union courses learn the foundations of law before exploring barriers that deter employees from making personal injury claims to ensure employers implement appropriate measures in the workplace. This enables students to be useful in their union roles rapidly.

Leaders ensure that students and apprentices are taught by highly skilled industry experts and experienced qualified academic staff. Teachers work hard to ensure their students receive the best possible education. They demonstrate a passion for their subject areas, which inspires learning. Teachers of A-level English literature bring to life the narratives they are teaching with personality and drama and encourage students to think beyond the examination. T-level health teachers continue to work as midwives and adult nurse practitioners and bring their knowledge of current practice and workplace behaviours into the classroom.

Teachers expertly use classroom activities that mirror the professional environment for students. In level 4 counselling, students practise their discussions in small groups to provide a safe space to explore new techniques and skills before using them in the therapy room. Level 3 uniformed protective services teachers model the directive communication skills needed for leading practical tasks so that students learn how to direct personal training sessions efficiently.

Teachers support students in developing their analytical, critical and independent thinking skills at a rapid pace. A-level psychology teachers incorporate psychological debates into taught topics. Students confidently discuss and debate the relative merits of systematic desensitisation as a technique for treating phobias. Students learn the skills needed to achieve the highest grades in their final examinations.

Teachers and leaders support students extremely well to help them stay on track to achieve. Teachers use a range of well-planned written assessments to evaluate and track students' progress and prepare them for their exams. When students are absent or identified as needing additional support, they are directed to additional bi-weekly support sessions. A-level business teachers lead support sessions that help students identify and fill gaps in their knowledge and understanding and practise examination questions to build their confidence. Students improve their assessment grades and final examination grades because of this support.

Teachers and assessors ensure apprentices develop high-quality, industry-specific skills that they apply to the workplace. They work well with employers to ensure that the skills apprentices develop are relevant for the future workplace, as well as current employer and industry needs. However, in level 3 plumbing and domestic heating technician and level 2 bricklayer, leaders have not ensured that apprentices and employers had a clear understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship at enrolment. Too many apprentices left their studies early. Leaders have now improved the enrolment and advice process to ensure apprentices study the right apprenticeship. More apprentices now remain on their apprenticeship, but it is too soon to see the impact on achievement rates.

Leaders make highly effective use of high-needs funding to provide individualised support for students with high needs. They work with local authorities to plan and design curriculums that accurately meet students' needs. Leaders have recruited a well-coordinated and highly skilled team of learning support assistants. These staff use supportive and assistive technologies with skill to ensure that students participate fully in lessons. Students with high needs on vocational and academic programmes achieve extremely well.

Students and apprentices experience a curriculum that extends substantially beyond the academic, technical and vocational. They benefit from a comprehensive tutorial programme that readies them for adult life and for progression into higher studies and employment. Students take part in a wide range of trips, visits, clubs and activities to support their studies and extend their experience. For example, construction students attend trade shows and masterclasses taught by trade experts to understand the use of new and emerging products in their work.

Leaders and managers provide a careers programme that offers effective advice and guidance to students and apprentices. Students attend practical careers experiences, including mock interviews, careers fairs and CV writing workshops. Staff give students who are moving on to higher education comprehensive support in completing their applications and attending interviews. As a result, students are well prepared for future success in education and employment, and many move on to competitive higher education institutions.

Leaders and governors are committed to the support, well-being and development of staff. Leaders ensure that the workload of staff is manageable. They provide well-being support and training and celebrate the success of individuals so that staff understand that they are valued. Leaders invest in training for teachers to improve their practice such as courses in metacognition and coaching and mentoring. Teachers work enthusiastically with teaching enhancement practitioners to develop their teaching skills. As a result, students experience extremely high-quality teaching.

Leaders have clear oversight of their subcontractors and ensure they meet their high expectations. They meet frequently with subcontractors and take part in quality assurance activities such as lesson visits and student feedback groups. Students on subcontracted courses achieve extremely well.

Governors have a thorough understanding of strengths and areas for development. They know the college well through their frequent involvement in learning walks, learner voice forums and college celebration events. Governors work with senior leaders to develop strategic priorities that continue to improve the opportunities for students to achieve the best outcomes, both in their qualifications and in their careers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130800
Address	Priory Road Shrewsbury Shropshire SY1 1RX
Contact number	01743235491
Website	www.scg.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	James Staniforth
Provider type	Sixth form college
Date of previous inspection	23 to 26 November 2021
Main subcontractors	The Education and Skills Partnership Ltd Severndale Specialist Academy SBC Training Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal quality, apprenticeships and information, 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

Helen Morgan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Kelly	His Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Keatley	Ofsted Inspector
Tony Day	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Beaman	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Jamieson	Ofsted Inspector
Joel Dalhouse	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicki Adams	Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Ibbotson	His Majesty's Inspector
Kim Bleasdale	His Majesty's Inspector
Rob Mottram	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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