

GROUP RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS CHARTERED STATUS



EKC Group has joined a select group of further education organisations, after being welcomed into the Chartered Institution of Further Education (CIFE).

Receiving Chartered status is a prestigious sign of excellence, with the Group now being the only FE provider in Kent to achieve it. The status acts as a beacon for superlative technical vocational training across the UK, with CIFE being the only FE-related organisation with royal assent to provide chartered status.

The institution works alongside industry to shape and influence the national skills system, ensuring that skills providers are recognised as the key drivers of economic growth and development within their local communities.

Dawn Ward CBE DL, Deputy Chair of the CIFE added: "EKC Group is recognised as a distinguished Further Education provider. Growing from a single site 12 years ago, it is now one of the largest Further Education organisations that is rightly proud of the transformational opportunities it has afforded to hundreds of thousands of learners.

"We welcome them to CIFE membership and know they will only add to the collective excellence that our membership represents."

Receiving the Chartered status for the organisation, Graham Razez, Chief Executive Officer for EKC Group said: "It is absolutely wonderful to achieve chartered status for our Group. We stretch across the whole of East Kent, and are absolutely passionate about delivering real change in the communities we serve.

"The CIFE is a well-established and sector leading organisation that hosts the best of the best from the sector. Joining them means that our Group now holds Chartered status, which is a testament to the hard work and diligence of our colleagues, and really showcases the outstanding work taking place by each and every one of them.

"I'm very proud of the Group for receiving this status, and look forward to working in partnership with CIFE to continue to grow the reputation of Further Education and skills provision across the country for the benefit of the diverse communities we all serve."

KENT CRICKET ACADEMY LAUNCHED

Students at Canterbury College will now have a unique opportunity to access world class cricket training as we launch our Kent Cricket Coaching Academy.

Working with its community partner, Kent Cricket, EKC Group has devised an exciting new scheme that will enable learners to enhance their cricket and coaching skills alongside the team at the nearby St Lawrence's Ground.

Drawing on the talent of coaches and players at the club, students will also be able to enjoy match day experiences as well as the professional fitness and training facilities at the Ground.

The Kent Cricket Coaching Academy will particularly complement those on the Sport National Extended Diploma Level 3 in Sports Coaching and Development course, however it will not just be limited to those learners. Opportunities to enrol in the Academy are extended to students at our new EKC Sixth Form College, also based at Canterbury College.

In fact, the wider Group will benefit because – as part of the Academy – the College's coaches of the future will have the chance to create and run fun coaching sessions for



the primary schools of EKC Group's Multi-Academy Trust, EKC Schools Trust. This collaboration between Colleges and Schools has already proven fruitful, having led to successful inter-school football and cricket tournaments.

Canterbury College Principal Victoria Copp-Crawley said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with Kent Cricket to provide a fantastic and unique opportunity for young people to join the Kent Cricket Coaching Academy, we will be combining an outstanding education experience with a professional sports coaching and performance programme.

"We are passionate about engaging sports enthusiasts to experience professional sport in the state-of-the-art Kent County Cricket facilities with professional coaches, players, and facilities, whilst gaining an education through a vocational coaching route or academic sixth form offer, with first-class facilities and teachers at Canterbury College.

"Students of Kent Cricket Coaching Academy will have the opportunity to draw on first-hand professional training, match day experiences and community coaching engagement, to support their progression and their next steps into employment or university."

NEW SPRING LANE BUILDINGS COMING TOGETHER



Work is progressing quickly on the Group's Spring Lane campus, with the main structure for its brand new buildings now completely in place.

The Canterbury College satellite site is the Group's central hub for Animal Care and Horticulture departments, and is receiving a much-needed refresh following EKC Group's acquisition of the facility in April 2020.

As well as updating the equipment and learning spaces provided to students, the new build will see the site's environmental credentials being given a dramatic boost. A 'green roof' planted with grass and flowers will increase biodiversity while providing natural insulation in winter and assisting with cooling in the summer.

Careful design work has gone into enhancing natural sunlight in the buildings, using sustainable construction materials and employing environmental ventilation systems – further reducing Spring Lane's climate impact.

The project's impressive rate of installation is thanks in no small part to the close collaboration between EKC Group and its partners Abbott Construction Ltd, Lee Evans Partnership LLP, b&m, Wilson & Partners LLP and QuinnRoss Consultants Ltd. Despite a large number of contributors, excellent communication has ensured the smooth running of operations despite inclement weather over recent months.

The new buildings are expected to be fully operational by the start of the next academic year.



EKC GROUP RAISES THOUSANDS AT CHRISTMAS



Staff and students across the Group raised more than £2,000 for charity across the Christmas period while spreading Christmas cheer through a range of social action projects.

The annual art auction, run in collaboration with Christ The King Sixth Form Colleges, saw artwork from staff and students raise more than £1,700 for charitable organisations helping those struggling over Winter.

Departments across all six Colleges also got involved in helping those in need this Christmas, hosting cake sales, raffles and pop-up shops. One example was Broadstairs College's Health and Social Care department, whose students established a jewellery and crafts pop-up shop on the campus, bringing in £122 for the Oasis Domestic Abuse Service. They also donated a range of supplies for the Service's users, creating welcome packs that were given to the organisation.

Meanwhile in Canterbury College, Travel and Tourism students got hands on as they made wreaths which they later sold in the centre of the College in support



of Barnardo's. Learners on the College's Level 3 Animal Management course got into the festive spirit by making Christmas boxes for dogs, filled with treats and toys, which were sent to Sandwich-based charity Futures for Dogs.

Running alongside this raft of charitable activities and fundraising campaigns was the Group-wide annual gift appeal, which brought in over 400 presents.

GROUP GEARS UP FOR KFE SKILLS COMPETITION



Students from across the Group have been putting their training to the test as Kent's Colleges prepare to battle it out in the KFE4Skills 2023 competition.

Learners from each of the county's FE colleges will be visiting EKC Group's Canterbury College in March to find out which will be named best in class this year in their chosen field of study. Across 22 disciplines, ranging from Hairdressing to Welding, competitors will complete challenges designed to test the skills they've learnt on their courses.

The winners of the Kent-wide heats could then be selected as the county's representatives in the regional and maybe even national World Skills competition. However, ahead of next month's Kent final, EKC Group had to find who will be their two representatives per discipline.



To do this, inter-College heats have been organised across the Group to pit students' skills against each other to find out who can perform their best under intense pressure. Thanks to the incredible effort of staff, as well as external stakeholders to act as judges, these proved incredibly successful with students creating brilliant work and enjoying themselves at the same time.

In Folkestone College's Excel building, apprentices and students from the Site Carpentry, Brick, and Painting and Decorating pathways battled it out to find out who could replicate challenging designs against the clock. Despite fantastic results from every learner and every College, only three could triumph. Those were Finley Johnson (Brick, Folkestone), Oliver Stickells (Site Carpentry, Folkestone), and Syren Shand (Painting and Decorating, Folkestone).

After winning his heat, Finley said: "I didn't expect to win and it feels really good to have my skills recognised by the judges. I'm excited but a bit nervous about the next round, however I'm hoping for a challenge to really test myself.

"I really enjoyed coming here today to show what I can do, and to meet other people like me who are working hard to get into a trade career."



Meanwhile, in Folkestone College's brand new Welcome building salon, Hairdressing students tried to prove they are a cut above the rest as they had their own Group competition. The four disciplines on display were Cut and Style, First Year Blow Dry, 'Eras'-themed Style and 'Avant Garde/Fantasy'-themed Style.

Ashford College's Hair students had a particularly good showing, winning all four categories. The victors were Jasmine Espley (First Year Blow Dry), Cheryl Hayden (Cut and Style), Jasmine Tiley-Smith (Eras-themed Style) and Kacey Moore (Fantasy-themed Style).

STUDENTS SHARE UNIQUE WORK PLACEMENTS



Learners across the Group undertake a wide range of work placements either as part of their course or to complement their training.

With industry experiences taking place constantly, it would be impossible to convey the full depth and breadth of the external work students do. However, two recent placements have seen learners collaborating with companies and organisations on particularly unique projects that are worth highlighting.

Canterbury College student, Talitha Ward-Smith, has been supplementing her Level 3 Countryside and Wildlife Conservation course by going abroad to work with animals. She travelled to Italy for six weeks with Ligurian Wolf, an organisation supported by the Wolves and Humans Foundation, where she researched and tracked Ligurian wolves to explore their habitat, behaviour and food source.

She said: "I was in the mountains leaving cameras to track the Ligurian wolves and learnt a lot about the environments and the animals that live there. I loved Italy - the people, culture, nature, difference in landscapes and how butterflies are still around even in December."

One of the College's Welding students, Kyle, has been working with pop culture 3D manufacturing company 3DreamDesign. Based in Herne Bay, Kyle has been assisting on a project to create an 8ft tall statue of Stranger Things creature, the demogorgon. The piece is now the subject of a competition being run by the business, highlighting how students' work experiences are beneficial to the businesses who work with the Group's Colleges.



ENGINEERING LABS START TO TAKE SHAPE



As part of EKC Group's continuing push to promote Engineering as a valuable and engaging career pathway, the Group is constructing Engineering labs at three of its campuses – Ashford College, Canterbury College and Dover Technical College.

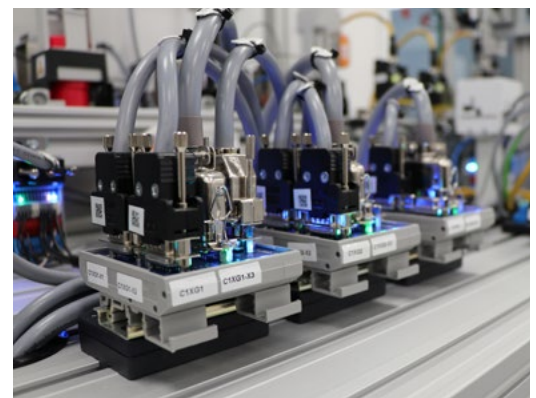
Using financial injections from the Government's Strategic Development Fund and T Level Development Fund, these new facilities are being kitted out with state-of-the-art CNC machines and robotic arms at a cost of more than £500,000. The labs will be open to students in the next academic year, however employers are also being encouraged to collaborate with the Group on manufacturing and engineering projects.

The new labs form part of a Kent-wide initiative to futureproof the county's businesses, with particular focuses on emerging technologies and sustainability. EKC Group is therefore going to offer educational sessions to businesses and their existing employees, as well as training the next generation of engineers and manufacturers on the equipment.

Outfitted with 3D printers, robotics systems and tooling machines, these facilities will expose the emerging talent pipeline to equipment they won't have had access to before.

Dover Technical College Principal Paul Owen said: "This workshop enables our students to undertake Industry expected processes on state-of-the-art equipment, that aligns itself with industry standards. Through this project we are now able to support students to develop the skills needed to prepare themselves for employment within the sector.

"We hope that this project will also give us the opportunity to further develop working partnerships with key stakeholders and employers, to support the development of this industry within the local community and beyond."



HONOUR FOR LONG-STANDING STAFF MEMBER



Anne joins in the fun by serving food to staff during Celebration Day

A long-standing member of EKC Group has been recognised in the New Year Honours after enhancing the lives of many thousands of Kent's residents.

The Group's former Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Anne Leese was recognised by King Charles III for 'services to education and the East Kent Community', reflecting her passion for voluntary activities and promoting educational opportunities across the region.

Anne retired last year after a 28-year career within the Group, having been instrumental in forming the Group as we know it today. Mrs Leese has been central to shaping and enhancing curriculum across our Colleges, promoting excellent outcomes for learners of all ages across East Kent. With Anne at the helm, our acquisition and overhaul of K College's Dover and Folkestone Campuses saw them quickly go from an 'Inadequate' Ofsted rating to Good' with outstanding features.

Alongside her work within the Group, Anne also acted as a member of the Association of College's Quality Committee, helping raise standards across the whole sector.

Anne has also been a huge champion of initiatives that enriched the wider East Kent communities the Group serves, such as our award-winning social action programme, that has delivered more than 2,000 projects since 2015.

This ties into her external voluntary work, which has seen many thousands of benefactors in the communities she serves. She helped lead Millmead Children's Centre for many years, ensuring support for one of the most deprived wards in the UK. Her unstinting work in this area has helped the centre grow, delivering vital services to many young families in the area.

Alongside that, Anne also acted as a trustee of the Margate Football Academy and a board member for a community hub in Ramsgate, showcasing her zeal to passionately support local initiatives and enhance the social prosperity of the area.

Upon hearing she had received the BEM for services to education and the East Kent Community, Anne said: "I was shocked, but absolutely delighted to receive this honour. I worked in Education for most of my career and absolutely loved every minute. I have seen how education can significantly enrich lives and contribute to our local communities.

"It has been a privilege to have worked with many dedicated people but one who needs special mention is Graham Razezy OBE. Graham has been an inspiration to me in striving to make Further Education in East Kent outstanding and inclusive for all."