

Bournemouth & Poole College

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A Dorset apprentice has been awarded a top prize in a national painting and decorating competition.

Aston Gooding, from Dorchester, is the first student from Bournemouth and Poole College to enter the contest.

An apprentice for [CG Fry & Son Ltd](#), Aston was crowned the junior winner of the Apprentice Paperhanger of the Year contest, at a dazzling masquerade ball hosted by national trade body the [Painting and Decorating Association](#).

The 21-year-old claimed a £200 cash prize along with a trophy and certificate at the event, held at [Oulton Hall Hotel](#) in Leeds on Saturday, 9 November.

Aston, who is studying towards his NVQ Level 2 in painting and decorating at Bournemouth and Poole College, said: "It's the first time that I've taken part in this competition and I'm absolutely speechless to be named the top junior paperhanger.

"My teacher at college suggested I enter. When we did it in class, everyone had zero experience, but I had worked on a job that involved a lot of wallpapering and thanks to my colleague Ian Mansbridge, I had managed to get to grips with it.

"The ball was a really good evening and I was just chuffed to be there. When they said I'd won I was gobsmacked.

"Before I started this apprenticeship, I had gone from job to job, but I've stuck with this and now I've won a national competition. I can't believe how much my life has changed in the last two years.

"I'd definitely encourage other young people to look at [apprenticeships](#) and to always go for something like the Apprentice Paperhanger of the Year competition if they're given the opportunity."

The Apprentice Paperhanger of the Year competition, sponsored by [Brewers](#), is open to apprentices from across the UK and was held this year at The Hub in Doncaster in June.

Aston, along with 10 other apprentices, battled it out in the junior-level competition where they were tasked with wallpapering a three-sided booth in just seven hours.

Neil Ogilvie, Chief Executive of the PDA, said: "Wallpapering is a very specific skill in the life of a professional decorator and Aston demonstrated that in abundance through his application and aptitude.

"Not only did he produce excellent quality work, he proved himself to be a professional painter and decorator of the future."

Nick Church, National Account Manager of Brewers, presented Aston with his award on stage.

He said: "This contest is a great platform for apprentices to showcase their skills and we're really proud to have been the main supporter for the last 10 years.

"I was delighted to be able to present Aston with his prizes and would like to congratulate him on being named this year's top junior paperhanger."

