

Richmond-upon-Thames College

General further education college

Inspection dates

10–13 October 2017

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Since the previous inspection, the new principal, senior management team and governors have been very successful in improving rapidly the outcomes for students. This is across all levels, qualifications and the majority of subject areas.
- Leaders and managers are effective in developing long-term partnerships with local employers, the local authority and universities. As a result, they carefully redesigned the curriculum to meet the needs of the local community better.
- Staff share a determination to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is now good.
- Students have high levels of respect for one another and behave very well. They enjoy attending college and have high aspirations for what they can achieve.
- Students develop their mathematical skills well. They use these skills well when making calculations or solving number problems within their vocational and academic subjects.
- Students on vocational courses develop very good technical skills which reflect industry standards. This is particularly effective in construction, engineering, catering and dance.
- Staff provide very good support for students in receipt of high-needs funding. Experienced staff develop students' confidence and independent living skills very well.
- The vast majority of students move into further or higher education, employment or apprenticeships on completion of their course.
- The proportion of students who achieve grades A* to C in GCSE English is very high.
- Not enough students at level 3 make rapid progress in relation to their starting points. Although the proportion of students who achieve grades at distinction and merit has improved, too many are not challenged sufficiently to achieve their full potential.
- Too few apprentices, particularly in construction, achieve their qualifications within the planned time. Staff do not support a minority of apprentices well enough to make good progress.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Richmond-upon-Thames College is a large general further education college based in the London Borough of Richmond. Founded in 1937, the college has in recent years diversified its provision to provide a broad range of vocational and academic courses. The college offers over 60 AS- and A-level courses and over 40 different vocational programmes. The vast majority of students study vocational routes through 16 to 19 study programmes. The college also offers adult programmes, apprenticeships and discrete programmes to students in receipt of high-needs funding.
- The college attracts students from a wide geographical area and enrolls students from 28 of the 33 London boroughs. Hounslow is the most popular borough for recruitment. The college works with two subcontractors to teach a range of literacy, numeracy and English for speakers for other languages (ESOL) courses to around 1,000 adults a year.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of apprentices, particularly in construction, who achieve their qualifications in the planned time by:
 - ensuring that teachers and assessors review more frequently and effectively the progress apprentices make
 - ensuring that leaders and managers use the same level of scrutiny for apprenticeships as they do for other provision in the termly management assessment panels, in order to identify quickly apprentices who are not on track to achieve in the planned time and to put actions in place to support them promptly.
- Continue to increase the number of students at level 3 who achieve high grades and make the rapid progress they are capable of by:
 - raising further the skills of teachers to enable them to plan and teach lessons that consistently and fully meet the needs of individual students
 - making sure that teachers provide lessons of an appropriate pace and level of challenge to help the most able students to make rapid progress and achieve or exceed their target grades.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the new principal, senior leadership team and governors have improved rapidly the majority of areas identified as requiring improvement. They have taken decisive action focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, outcomes for students on qualifications at all levels, and in the vast majority of subject areas, have quickly improved.
- Leaders and managers have a clear and ambitious vision for the college to increase the participation of learners by offering a varied curriculum to meet the needs of the local communities. They focus well on improving the college's facilities and securing its financial position. As a result, they have successfully reshaped the curriculum offer to increase the number of vocational courses for students, particularly in construction, engineering and sport.
- Leaders and managers work effectively with a wide range of partners, including employers, the chamber of commerce, local universities and the local education partnership. They use these partnerships well to develop training initiatives and programmes to support students in progressing into employment and in engaging with their local communities. For example, employers work with teachers to upskill sports students in new massage techniques, a skill needed in the local area.
- Leaders and managers work closely with their subcontractors to ensure that the programmes they teach are appropriate and complement the college offer. Managers scrutinise the performance of the subcontractors and monitor the contracts rigorously to ensure that students receive a good-quality experience.
- The new management team has high expectations for students and staff. Managers promote well a culture of developing staff through a comprehensive training programme, including external work shadowing and industry placements. For example, catering teachers compete in international cookery shows to enhance their skills, and sports teachers volunteer at local and international clubs, such as Volleyball England, to maintain their skills.
- Leaders and managers use the information available to them well to evaluate accurately the quality of provision and the progress students make, and to identify areas for improvement. Through termly reviews, managers and teachers quickly identify areas that underperform, and implement appropriate actions and support to make improvements. However, managers do not use the same level of scrutiny on apprenticeship programmes. As a result, they did not identify early enough that timely achievement rates for apprentices in 2016/17 could not improve.
- Leaders and managers have successfully introduced plans and actions to improve students' English and mathematics skills, particularly for those on study programmes and adult students. For example, teachers use induction booklets that accurately assess students' skills in English and mathematics. They introduced a 'dirty 30' initiative to improve spelling and provide extensive workshops for students. As a result, more students now pass qualifications in these subjects.
- Leaders, managers and staff ensure that there is a culture of tolerance, respect and

safety for all students. Students contribute to the college community through well-managed activities, such as the student union and the tutorial programme. They are tolerant of each other and behave responsibly. Students from different cultures and backgrounds work well together.

The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, more than half of the governing body, including the chair, are new to post. Governors have a diverse range of relevant skills and their experience equips them well to understand the college. They work closely with the principal and the college management teams to establish a strong focus on meeting stakeholders' needs, improving teaching and addressing financial challenges, all of which have improved.
- Governors monitor the college's performance rigorously. They use the detailed information and quality reports they receive very well to question and challenge the management teams in a constructive way.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers have robust safeguarding systems in place to recruit staff, monitor disclosures and check work placements appropriately. The number of students disclosing personal safeguarding concerns has increased, and staff resolve them well through the very effective partnerships they have with external agencies.
- Students at the college feel safe and know whom to speak to if they have any concerns. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.
- Leaders and managers implement the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty well. Training for the majority of students is effective in raising their awareness of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, a minority of apprentices do not fully understand or appreciate the relevance of the training they have received.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Students are well motivated, have high aspirations and are keen to learn. Current students and apprentices make or exceed the progress expected of them.
- Teachers and assessors are well qualified. They are ambitious for their students and use their industry experience well to plan and teach sessions that interest and meet the needs of the vast majority of students. Students appreciate their teachers' knowledge and value the way they successfully relate teaching to real-life situations. For example, film studies teachers link topics about evaluation and analysis of scenes to how these would be used in industry.
- Teachers assess carefully students' starting points and regularly assess their progress in lessons. In the majority of lessons, teachers use this information well to set students target grades and check that students are prepared fully for their formal assessments. As a result, most students pass their assignments and examinations.

- Staff carry out a good range of activities at the start of the term with students, and ensure that they are on the right programme, at the appropriate level, and have the correct support in place. Teachers make suitable adjustments for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Support workers provide good additional support to ensure that they participate well and make good progress. For example, in catering, support staff work closely with students in practical sessions to develop their knife and pastry-making skills.
- The majority of students receive clear, helpful and detailed feedback on their work. They know how well they have done and what they need to improve. Teachers make good use of the college's electronic recording systems to track the progress students make and identify any students falling behind. Teachers quickly arrange extra support and guidance to get students back on track.
- Teachers and students make good use of a wide range of resources. Online learning and software packages stimulate learning, keep students engaged and develop their independent learning skills well. Teachers encourage students successfully to use the learning resources, including computers and cameras, and students rapidly develop their skills in the use of technology.
- In the majority of lessons, students make good progress in improving their English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Students recognise the importance of these skills in their future learning and careers. Students have good skills in these areas, which is evident in the high standard of work, the range of relevant vocabulary they use and classroom discussions. However, these skills are not as well developed for apprentices and students who receive high-needs funding.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons and tutorials to promote equality and celebrate diversity. Students participate well in discussions that are made relevant to their lives and, as a result, develop a good understanding of the importance of these topics. For example, students on travel qualifications know how to adapt their approach and responses when dealing with complaints from a range of customers.
- In a minority of theory lessons, mostly academic, and in a small proportion of ICT lessons, teachers' expectations of students are too low and students are not encouraged to work to their full potential. In these lessons, teachers do not manage students well enough to ensure that they pay attention, complete their work and progress at the rate of which they are capable.
- In a minority of vocational lessons, teachers do not support students and apprentices to extend their thinking and deepen their learning. In these lessons, students are not well prepared for higher levels of study or for reaching their full potential in their careers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students and apprentices behave well in classes, in the workplace and at college. They show a willingness to learn and are respectful towards each other and to staff. The majority of students are punctual, enjoy their learning and have high aspirations.
- Students make good progress in developing their practical skills and confidence. In bricklaying sessions, students confidently use tools, materials and techniques to produce good-quality work building differently designed walls. In electrical engineering, students

talk confidently about the skills they have developed in wiring, and how they understand currents and voltage. Students on media courses develop the skills to direct films and create animations.

- Students benefit from a wide range of relevant work-related activities, including external trips, employers' talks and external work experience. Students on professional cooking courses attend work placements at prestigious venues such as Windsor Castle, and students on sports programmes work regularly at local gyms and leisure centres. As a result, students develop good work-related skills, such as attitudes to work, communication and team working.
- The majority of students benefit from good initial and continuing careers education advice about their course and the options available to them on completion of their course. A team of experienced advisers engages well with students to ensure that they are on the right course and prepared well for their next steps. Staff support students to complete university applications and curricula vitae, and to practise interview techniques. As a result, the majority of students move to higher-level courses, apprenticeships or employment.
- Students develop well their mathematics skills and can use techniques accurately in relation to their studies. For example, students on engineering courses tackle mathematical equations in relation to design with confidence and skill. In business studies, students develop good accountancy skills.
- Students produce work of a good standard. They use the correct terminology and vocabulary accurately in their written work. Students' practical work is often at a very high standard. For example, in ceramics, students produce very good quality pieces of pottery, decorated well.
- Students' attendance in the majority of lessons is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Managers now monitor attendance closely and have implemented effective ways to improve attendance across courses. However, attendance in mathematics and English lessons, although improving, is still too low.
- Students develop additional skills through the achievement of qualifications, projects and competitions outside their main course. For example, sports students achieve coaching certificates. Through the community project, 'My world, my home', students complete a project to plan and organise a local community campaign, and develop good skills in project management. One student in construction won the UK national SkillBuild competition.
- Students feel safe, know how to raise concerns and have a good understanding of personal safety, including online safety. The majority of students understand well the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation. However, a small minority of apprentices do not fully understand how these affect their daily lives.
- Staff prepare students well for life in modern Britain and teachers promote British values effectively during tutorials and in lessons. Students take part in the wide variety of activities in place, such as 'parliamentary question time', 'shout LGBT' and black history week.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications across all provision types, ages and at all levels has improved and is now good. Current students and apprentices make good progress and develop good practical and vocational skills. They produce work of a high standard.
- The majority of students on 16 to 19 study programmes, which account for the largest numbers of students, achieve their qualifications. A very high proportion of students who complete GCSEs in English achieve grades A* to C. The proportion of study programme students who achieve functional skills in mathematics and English has increased substantially. However, it is still too low.
- The vast majority of adult students achieve their qualifications. Achievement rates on access to higher education courses has improved rapidly. A high proportion of adult students completing functional skills courses in mathematics, English and ICT with subcontractors develop a good range of skills that support them into work, and almost all achieve their qualifications.
- Current apprentices make very good progress which leads to their taking on more responsibilities at work, and gaining promotions and permanent employment. The majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications. However, the proportion of apprentices who achieve by the planned end date is too low and requires improvement.
- The vast majority of students progress to employment, apprenticeships, or further or higher education. Staff support and prepare students well for their next steps.
- Managers have successfully addressed the gaps in achievement so that most groups of students achieve as well as others, especially males and females and students from different ethnic backgrounds. The small number of children looked after and care leavers make good progress and achieve as well as their peers.
- Students for whom the college receives high-needs funding and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well. Teachers and staff support them well to develop good skills that prepare them for the future. The majority of students develop their independence skills effectively to support them to progress to higher levels of study.
- Although the proportion of students who achieve a merit and distinction in academic and level 3 diploma qualifications has increased, too many students are not challenged sufficiently to meet their full potential, particularly in ICT programmes and the performing arts.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The college has approximately 1,700 students on study programmes. The vast majority of students follow vocational courses in construction, engineering, business, health, science, arts, sport, ICT, catering, travel and tourism. The majority study at level 3. The rest follow vocational programmes at levels 1 and 2 in a variety of academic subjects.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and teachers have improved the quality of study programmes across all subjects. Students' achievement of their qualifications,

including English and mathematics GCSE, has improved and is now good.

- Students enjoy well-planned and individual programmes which meet the principles of the study programme very well. Through a thorough and detailed assessment of their starting points, staff carefully plan programmes and activities to meet the needs and interests of students. As a result, students remain focused on their studies and motivated to achieve their goals.
- Students take part in a wide range of meaningful and relevant work experience and other work-related activities, such as external talks and employers' taster days. Staff have strong and effective links with local employers. Students develop in confidence and gain valuable work-related skills. For example, they communicate very well, display appropriate workplace behaviour and work well together in teams.
- Teachers plan a range of activities which develop students' practical skills and knowledge well. For example, in health and social care, students complete effective research and a matrix on the barriers to communication through which they show high levels of understanding. In level 1 carpentry courses, students use the appropriate tools confidently to make different types of joints in woodwork to a good standard.
- Teachers use their specialist vocational knowledge well to make learning interesting, relevant and enjoyable for students. Teachers link theory and practical sessions to industry standards effectively. As a result, students have a good understanding of what to expect in their chosen industry, and produce work of the required industry standard. They are justifiably proud of their work and achievements.
- Students have high ambitions and receive useful and helpful advice and support from staff to help them plan and prepare for their employment or education. Students who intend to go into higher education receive good support with their applications and a large proportion of A-level students have gone to prestigious universities.
- Teachers have high expectations and the majority of students respond positively, displaying high levels of engagement. As a result, the large majority of students make good progress. However, in a minority of lessons and in particular at level 3, teaching lacks challenge and teachers fail to take into account students' existing skills and abilities. As a result, teachers provide little opportunity for students to make rapid progress and this hinders their potential to achieve higher grades.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- At the time of the inspection, the college had around 400 students aged 19 or over. The majority of current students are on access to higher education courses, with smaller numbers joining 16 to 19 study programmes in a variety of subject areas. The college works with two subcontractors to teach basic skills in mathematics, English and ICT. The number of current students with subcontractors is low but will increase substantially as the year progresses. Subcontractors taught the majority of adults in 2016/17.
- Leaders, managers and teachers plan and design the adult programmes carefully and effectively to ensure that they meet the needs of the community. Programmes start at different times in the year and meet the aspirations of adults well. For example, in accounting, students specifically chose the college due to the fast-track courses available

to them.

- Managers develop strong partnerships with subcontractors and Jobcentre Plus to provide a range of programmes that meet local priorities and support adults back into work and education. Teachers successfully support students to overcome barriers to employment and learning, such as their attitude to work, confidence and self-esteem. As a result, the majority of students progress to higher-level learning or employment.
- The majority of adults on the subcontractors' programmes improve their skills in English and/or mathematics and achieve qualifications at appropriate levels. In mathematics, students confidently identify prime numbers and make accounting calculations successfully. In English, students improve their listening and communication skills well.
- Teachers and staff support adult students well to develop the skills they need to progress towards their individual goals. For example, in art, students develop good study skills to support them to progress to higher-level learning. In English, students clearly understand how the skills they develop will support them in their chosen careers. In courses taught by subcontractors, students identify well how their course supports them to progress into further learning to become nurses, teaching assistants and cabin crew.
- Students develop high levels of practical skills and knowledge, and make good progress in lessons. Teachers plan and teach activities that motivate students and keep their interest. In accounting, students work at their own pace and individual support by teachers is effective. In art, students work well together to share ideas on hat making, drawing motifs and when working on joint projects.
- Teachers mark students' work frequently and accurately. Teachers give students constructive feedback which includes what students have achieved and how they can improve their work. In access to higher education courses, students receive helpful feedback linked to exam criteria early to the course. As a result, students have a good understanding of how to structure their answers in sufficient detail.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge students to extend their learning and maximise the progress they make. Students' progress is not checked well in these lessons and those capable of making quicker progress are not inspired to do so.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college currently has approximately 150 apprentices on frameworks in engineering, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, plumbing, accounting, computing and business administration. The largest group of apprentices are in engineering. The majority of apprentices are 19 and over and on advanced apprenticeship programmes.
- Leaders and managers work very closely with local employers and the community to ensure that the apprenticeship programmes meet employers' needs very well. As a result, apprenticeship numbers and the variety of programmes offered have increased. The majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications, and current apprentices are making good progress.
- Apprentices receive good on- and off-the-job training. They take part in highly relevant tasks designed to teach them valuable techniques and processes that they can apply effectively in the workplace. For example, in computing, apprentices implement the installation of firewalls that enable their employer to monitor inappropriate use of the

internet. In business administration, apprentices learn how to lay out professional meeting minutes. As a result, apprentices enjoy their learning and appreciate the up-to-date training they receive.

- Apprentices develop good industry skills and demonstrate the expected behaviours required for their sectors. In engineering, apprentices use their newly acquired knowledge well to draw graphical representations which they use accurately to calculate force and equilibrium.
- Apprentices benefit from additional activities and courses which develop their skills beyond the requirements of their qualifications. For example, in construction, apprentices contribute to the development of new classrooms and workshops, build new rooms, reconfigure existing classrooms and learn skills such as woodturning. In computing, apprentices develop a range of practical skills such as making ethernet cables and the correct use of testing equipment.
- Employers benefit from the skills and confidence apprentices develop on their programme. They easily identify the positive contributions apprentices make to their business and, as a result, give apprentices extra responsibilities and tasks to complete. The majority of apprentices who complete their programme remain in sustained employment. A small proportion progress to higher levels of apprenticeships or onto higher education, sponsored by their employers.
- Teachers and assessors have high expectations of apprentices and support the majority of apprentices well. This is particularly strong for the large group of engineering apprentices. However, for the small proportion of apprentices who need extra support, assessors do not consider the information they have on apprentices' prior attainment fully or quickly enough to arrange the appropriate support. As a result, these apprentices do not start to make progress as quickly as their peers.
- The standard of apprentices' practical work, and the majority of apprentices' written work, is good. However, in a minority of instances, teachers and assessors do not provide apprentices with sufficiently detailed feedback on how to make improvements to their written English and presentation of work. As a result, in these cases, apprentices' work is not at the required and expected industry standard.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications in the planned time is too low. In construction, staff allowed a group of apprentices to go beyond their planned time due to ineffective planning at the start of the programme. These apprentices, although now making progress, have not had regular and effective reviews to support them to achieve their qualifications.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college currently has 83 students in receipt of high-needs funding. Over half of these students are on discrete foundation courses and the rest are on a wide range of vocational and academic courses across the college.
- Managers and staff have high expectations of students. They use the allocated additional funding effectively to provide programmes that are carefully planned and varied to meet the needs of students well. Staff have good partnerships with local schools and, as a result, share resources and good practice in tracking students' progress.

- The assessment of students' skills and needs at the start of their course is good. Staff use this information and previous information from schools and health professionals very well to manage the transition from school to college. Staff organise interesting taster days to prepare students and ensure that they are on the right course to meet their needs.
- A highly experienced and enthusiastic team supports students with complex needs very effectively. Teachers and support staff in discrete courses plan and teach lessons that motivate, challenge and engage students very well. Students enjoy a variety of activities in these lessons, such as dance. Students develop high levels of coordination and dance ability, and perform at prestigious venues such as Sadler's Wells.
- The vast majority of students make good progress and achieve their qualifications. Staff support students very well to develop in confidence and increase their independence. Experienced support staff work closely and effectively with students on vocational and academic courses. As a result, they make good progress, and at the same pace as their peers.
- Teachers and support staff prepare students very well for employment. The majority of students take part in meaningful work experience which meets their individual needs. For example, students work in the local shops, restaurants, nursery schools and the wildlife trust. Where students have a particular interest, staff arrange appropriate placements to support students to understand well the types of work they could move into. For example, they arranged for students interested in buses to have a work placement at the bus station. As a result, students develop a good range of work-related skills.
- Teachers develop students' mathematics skills well. They effectively integrate mathematics into lessons and activities. Students working in the college shop and the Apple Tree café confidently deal with taking money and working out change. Students taking part in wheelchair rugby successfully explain shapes in relation to the design of the sports court.
- The majority of students progress to higher levels of study or employment when they complete their course. Students receive effective information and guidance which supports them well to make informed choices about their next steps. Students have high expectations, they talk highly about the support they receive from teachers and support staff. A majority of students feel they would not have been able to succeed without this support.
- Teachers do not consistently support students sufficiently to improve their English skills. In vocational courses, where students have targets to use a word book to improve vocabulary, teachers do not regularly check that these are completed and that students are making enough progress in improving the range of vocabulary they use.
- Teachers do not sufficiently challenge the most able students to achieve at the higher levels of which they are capable. Targets set at progress reviews are vague and do not give students clear information on how they can improve their work or exceed their target grade. In vocational lessons, teachers do not consistently plan and teach activities that support individual students' abilities. As a result, a minority of students do not progress quickly enough.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130454
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,650
Principal/CEO	Robin Ghurbhurun
Telephone number	020 8607 8000
Website	www.rutc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	223	30	343	137	1,185	144	0	100
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	17	44	9	74	0	4		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	83							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Adult training network Lifelong training centre							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, curriculum and student services, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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