

# Stanmore College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130440

**Name of lead inspector:** Andy Harris HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 10 December 2010

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Elm Park  
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## Information about the provider

1. Stanmore College is a small general further education college in Harrow, in the north west of London. In 2000 Stanmore College was organised into Stanmore Sixth Form College and Stanmore Adult College, but they were restructured back into one organisation in 2007. The sixth form focus remains, but with a greater balance between GCE AS- and A-level courses and vocational courses. Since the previous inspection school sixth form provision in the local area has expanded significantly. The college is now more comparable to other general further education colleges, rather than sixth form colleges.
2. Stanmore College has courses in all subject areas except construction and engineering. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups in 2009/10 was 77% for students aged 16 to 18 and 62% for adults; this compares to a local figure of around 59% of the population. In 2008/09, the proportion of Year 11 pupils in Harrow who achieved five or more grades A\* to C at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was above national averages. However, a growing proportion of Stanmore's students now come from other areas of London, with a 16% increase in students not from Harrow schools since the previous inspection.
3. A dedicated department offers employer responsive programmes, and this aspect of the college's work has grown significantly since the previous inspection. The Train to Gain programmes in health and social care were inspected as a sample of the college's employer responsive provision.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Acton Training Centre
  - London Borough of Harrow.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - Akona
  - Serac
  - Capel Manor College
  - Academy Training
  - Shaftesbury School
  - Mapalim
  - Crechendo
  - Skills Team.

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled students in 2009/10</b>
<p><b>Provision for young students:</b></p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning</p>	<p>1,126 full-time students 75 part-time students</p> <p>145 full-time students 12 part-time students</p>
<p><b>Provision for adult students:</b></p> <p>Further education (19+)</p>	<p>100 full-time students 1,063 part-time students</p>
<p><b>Employer provision:</b></p> <p>Train to Gain</p>	<p>1,026 part-time learners</p>

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Subject Areas</b>	
Health, public services and care (employer responsive provision)	1
Science and mathematics	2
Literacy and numeracy	4

## Overall effectiveness

6. The college's overall effectiveness is good. The majority of students are on courses with success rates which are above national averages for similar institutions. Performance in some areas is outstanding, including many A-level courses, some vocational provision and Train to Gain programmes. There are pockets of underperformance, particularly on short courses for adults, but the college has taken steps to improve those areas.
7. Committed students, who are enjoying their time at the college, contribute to teaching and learning that is good overall. The better lessons move along briskly and engage students. In poorer lessons not all students have work that is aimed at their ability level. In general, college observations of teaching and learning lead to improvements, although monitoring of identified improvement activities is insufficient, and the college is amending its systems following the recognised over grading of a few lessons 2009/10.

8. Partnership working is outstanding. Thorough work with employers, the local authority, schools and other colleges ensures that there is a balanced offer of courses that meets employers' and students' needs particularly well. Care and support for students are comprehensive and effective.
9. Good leadership and management have encouraged an atmosphere of mutual respect amongst staff and between staff and students, with a proper focus on students achieving their goals. Governors play an effective role in guiding and challenging the college. Self-assessment and quality improvement are generally effective, although there is insufficient use of the readily available data for routine low-level monitoring of a few aspects of performance. The involvement of students in college activities is very good. They feel safe and believe that concerns, on safety or other matters, are listened to and any resulting actions are normally promptly implemented. The college provides good value for money.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for students are good. In several areas they are outstanding, and they are good for the large majority of the college's provision. However, in a small proportion of the college's provision, particularly short-course provision for adults on literacy and numeracy courses, success rates are inadequate.
- Students participate actively and enthusiastically in their courses. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most lessons are well planned and students enjoy interesting activities and make good progress in their studies. In a few instances, activities and questioning fail to challenge all the students or ensure that more able students make further progress.
- Resources for learning are good. The availability of information and learning technologies (ILT) has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Most teachers use ILT effectively to supplement their teaching and to support learning. Students use the virtual learning environment (VLE) well for research, to develop their knowledge and to catch up on missed work.
- Teachers and assessors manage assessment well, and verification is good, particularly in Train to Gain. Feedback on written work is generally effective. Staff and students use electronic learning plans regularly. Although compliance targets are used particularly well in the plans, the use of short-term academic targets in these plans, and particularly in literacy and numeracy provision, is under developed.
- The lesson observation scheme is effective in helping improvements. Although some observations were over graded in 2009/10, the college has improved its systems and observation results are now more accurate. However, managers do not yet sufficiently moderate the judgements on the quality of lessons, or monitor the implementation of identified actions for improvement.
- Partnership working is outstanding. The college works well with a diverse range of partners, for example with Harrow Council and Barnet Football Club. The particularly effective work with schools and other colleges has resulted in a

wider range of choices for 16- to 18-year-olds and a more coherent programme offer in the area.

- The quality of counselling and mentoring is a strong feature of the college's pastoral systems. These services have enabled a very high percentage of students to stay on in education and to progress successfully.
- Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior managers have successfully managed major changes since the previous inspection. All staff support the college's mission to 'inspire and support you to achieve success'.
- Governance is good. The board of governors uses the expertise of members effectively to support the college, and the governors contribute well to setting the mission and the strategy. Managers inform governors well about the performance of the college, and governors know where the strengths and areas for improvement lie.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students feel they are treated fairly and that there is mutual respect between students and staff. Differences in performance between different groups of students are slight.
- Students are heavily involved in decision making, in particular through the 'student parliament'. They make a mature contribution and their views are taken into account. Students feel very safe at the college and managers promote their safeguarding effectively.
- Self-assessment and action planning are good overall, and largely result in improvements. However, targets are not always sufficiently precise. Teams do not all make full use of data in evaluating provision and routinely reviewing progress at a detailed level. Actions to bring the quality of AS provision back up to previous high standards have been well planned, but not yet fully evaluated.

### **What does Stanmore College need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure all staff working with literacy and numeracy students employ stimulating and challenging learning activities so that all students participate fully, make good progress and succeed. Increase the use of relevant learning materials to encourage students in their skills.
- Ensure that, across the college, more probing questioning is used that challenges students' knowledge and enables students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of their subject. Ensure that all lessons stretch the more able students to help them to achieve higher grades and reach their full potential.
- In literacy and numeracy, use initial and diagnostic assessment more effectively to set targets for the development of individuals' skills and to aid detailed lesson planning. Involve students in recognising, recording and evaluating their own progress and in setting new targets to improve their performance.
- Ensure that managers moderate lesson observations more effectively to provide the college with an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. Monitor the progress of improvement actions resulting from observations so that appropriate support can be provided to staff in a more timely manner.

- Make better routine use of data to set, monitor and review more detailed targets, to ensure improvements in the quality of provision. In particular, routinely and critically examine the effectiveness of actions taken to improve the progress of students on AS courses and literacy and numeracy programmes.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What students like:**

- the friendly, safe community atmosphere in the college
- supportive and interested tutors and teachers
- the additional support that is available for a range of needs
- the useful on-line systems for studying, and for the planning of work
- the opportunity for study provided by the learning resource centre
- being able to take part in intensive courses focusing on a particular aspect of a programme.

#### **What students would like to see improved:**

- more variety in some lessons to cater for the differing ways that students work
- better accommodation and heating in some areas of the college
- more trips to universities for AS-level students.

### **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What employers like:**

- good delivery of training, with minimal disruption to work patterns
- the professional response to initial enquiries
- the support and guidance offered to students
- approachable assessors who are keen to help.

#### **What employers would like to see improved:**

- more face-to-face contact between the assessors and employers
- consistency in the standard of communication about the setting up and administration of some programmes.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

10. Stanmore College has a good capacity to improve. The college has sustained high pass rates in most courses for 16- to 18-year-olds on intermediate and advanced level courses. Success rates for the majority of provision are high. Managers have successfully effected major changes since the previous inspection. The principal, senior managers and governors have established a common purpose throughout the college which is supporting the students to succeed. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and the college's quality improvement processes have a good record of success. Students make a mature and helpful contribution to improving the work of the college; employers and other stakeholders rightly influence provision. Governors use their expertise and experience effectively to set the mission and strategy for the college and challenge the college to raise standards. Although one subject area underperformed compared to the previous inspection, key grades have improved and the college has made good progress in most of the areas for improvement identified at that inspection.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. Full-time courses at advanced level constitute the great majority of the college's provision. Students aged 16 to 18 on these courses have success rates that are consistently above national rates. Students achieve some outstanding results on A-level courses, with very high success rates and good achievement of high grades. Outcomes for a substantial number of other advanced long courses, particularly vocational courses, are generally very good. AS success rates, previously at very good levels, dipped in 2009/10 to around national averages.
12. At intermediate level success rates for long courses are high, and are well above national rates. There are some outstanding examples, particularly in vocational areas, where hairdressing and beauty therapy and health and social care programmes routinely record very high levels of success.
13. Success rates for adults on short courses, which constitute a small and diminishing part of the college's provision, are low. This mainly reflects outcomes in the preparation for life and work subject area. The college recognises this aspect as an area for improvement and has already introduced a range of actions to correct this.
14. The very large majority of the many learners on Train to Gain courses complete their programmes within their planned timescales. The overall success rates in these programmes are very high.
15. Although outcomes in one subject area directly inspected, literacy and numeracy, were inadequate, the other inspected subject areas had good and outstanding results. In the eight areas not directly inspected the college self-



assessed four as outstanding, two as good and two as satisfactory. Analysis of data indicates that outcomes in those areas are generally in line with those high grades.

16. Students on the major vocational courses perform well above the levels predicted in light of their prior performance. Students on A and AS courses perform in line with expectations based on previous examination results, but make comparatively good progress when all elements of their social background and course content are taken into account. There was no significant, unexplained variation in success rates for different ethnic or other groups of students in 2008/09.
17. A notable feature of the college is students' enthusiasm for their courses and college life. In most lessons students contribute actively and they are particularly well involved in the tutorial system. Attendance is high and punctuality good. The well-planned, generally successful range of courses aids students' potential employment. A high proportion of advanced level students progress on to higher education.
18. Students feel very safe at the college. The small community, the mutual support between students and staff, satisfactory security arrangements and rigorous college policies and working practices provide a very safe working environment.
19. Tutorial sessions, advice from college and visiting medical staff and college-wide events all contribute to the students' understanding of healthy lifestyles. An extensive initiative to encourage students to undertake physical activities has had some success. The food in the well-used refectory offers an increasing number of healthy, well-priced options that students are now taking up.
20. Students are actively involved in the running of their college. An increasing number of students are working in local community schemes through a volunteering network. Theatre study students design and deliver an impressive number of performances in local schools which help pupils better understand topics such as sexually transmitted infections or internet safety. Sustainable development is an increasingly important part of college activities.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

21. Students enjoy their time at the college and speak highly of their supportive teachers. Most lessons are well planned and include appropriate activities that interest students and promote learning. Initial diagnosis of students' needs for additional support is good, and learning support assistants are used effectively in lessons. In many lessons, the pace is brisk and challenging activities engage and motivate students well, enabling them to make good progress. However, too few lessons provide a full range of activities which meet the needs of students at every level. Effective use of peer assessment enables students to develop confidence in evaluating the work of colleagues and to accept comments about their own performance. Nevertheless, too often teachers' questioning techniques provide insufficient challenge to students.

22. Resources for learning are good. The college has significantly improved the availability of ILT since the last inspection. It is used increasingly well to support learning. Students speak positively about their use of the VLE to catch up on missed work or to research for extra resources to support their learning.
23. Teachers and assessors organise and manage assessment well and verify standards effectively. Teachers provide prompt feedback to students on their performance in written work. Most teachers provide general guidance on how students could improve their grades, and a few provide more detailed guidance. However, teachers pay insufficient attention to correcting spelling and grammar. Staff and students use electronic learning plans well. These contain full reports and some actions for students. Although teachers set detailed targets linked with student activity, such as punctuality, they do not yet record short-term academic targets linked with skills and knowledge in specific subjects to enable students to improve. On Train to Gain programmes, assessors use a good variety of assessment strategies appropriate to the different occupational areas.
24. Managers observe lessons taught by all staff annually. The college's lesson observation scheme successfully identifies the key strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. However, the college acknowledges that in 2009/10 a few lesson observations were over graded. The college has recently honed its procedures to ensure that observations are now more searching and accurate. Nevertheless, the college has yet to implement effective systems to moderate the judgements. Lesson observations lead to detailed action plans for improvement. Where necessary, an appropriate range of staff development activities is available and effective support by teaching and learning coaches is provided. However, managers do not sufficiently monitor the implementation of actions to improve teacher performance identified through observations.
25. The college meets the needs of students and other users well. It has recently broadened its offer of advanced courses. For instance, the introduction of the International Baccalaureate has successfully engaged a new cohort of students. The college has introduced a range of vocationally-based advanced level courses that are more successful in meeting the career aspirations of school leavers. Provision is planned carefully and delivered well. Good relationships have been established with employers and the college consults closely with them on possible changes to accreditation to ensure that they match the employers' needs. Assessors conduct workplace assessments in a flexible manner in order to minimise disruption to learners' and employers' workplace commitments. Students following beauty therapy courses are linked with prospective employers through a college-arranged open day which has enabled students to find employment.
26. The college provides a well-established enrichment programme through college and subject area initiatives. These clearly support academic achievement as well as inspiring students to explore new and different progression options.
27. Partnership working is outstanding. The college has established strong and trusted links with local secondary schools and colleges specifically to ensure that

- there is a balanced offer of advanced level courses across the borough. This partnership has contributed to a reduction in the borough of the number of Year 11 pupils who drop out of education. Stanmore College has worked creatively with local primary schools and community groups to engage the population in education and training.
28. The college works closely with Harrow Council and has made a significant contribution to building the skill and knowledge level of much of the council's workforce. Over 600 staff members have successfully gained a variety of work-related qualifications. A partnership with Barnet Football Club is very effective and is providing flexible learning programmes for students who are part of the football academy.
  29. Students feel cared for and well supported. The college offers a wide range of support services, including counselling and learner mentoring. Of the hundred students who received mentoring support in 2009/10, over 90% progressed into further education, training or work. Practical welfare support provided for young people and vulnerable students is good. Support for students with additional needs, such as medical conditions and learning disabilities, is well established and effective. A variety of approaches are in place to ensure students receive appropriate advice and career guidance about next steps in education, training or employment.
  30. Students with additional learning needs receive timely and specialist support from tutors and learning support assistants. The well-used drop-in facility has, however, limited space for the many students using it and a high level of background noise creates some distraction. The retention and attainment rates of students in receipt of additional support are higher than the college average.
  31. Tutorial provision has recently been re-organised and provides good quality support. Students and tutors liaise effectively with curriculum staff, partly through the electronic personal learning plan. The weekly tutorials are welcomed by full-time students, who also appreciate the informed guidance provided by tutors when they apply to university. The quality of tutorial provision is monitored through an observation scheme that helps promote improvement.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

32. The principal and senior management team have successfully managed major changes in the college since the previous inspection. The college is now more inclusive in its provision and more learner centred. Communication is good, and morale is high. Staff members value the principal's open and democratic management style. The college supports managers well in taking on additional responsibilities for which they are held to account. The college sets targets at course and college level which senior managers and governors closely monitor.
33. The board of governors uses the expertise of members effectively to support the college. Members contribute well to the mission and strategy. For instance,

- they have carefully reviewed the college's future options in light of external pressures. Their focus is on students, both their experience and outcomes. Governors are well aware of their duties in relation to safeguarding and equality and diversity, with a board member sitting on relevant college committees. Governors challenge managers well. Reports to governors are succinct and evaluative but some lack appropriate detail. Nevertheless, governors are well informed about the performance of the college and know where the strengths and areas for improvement lie.
34. Staff and students are well aware of safeguarding matters and procedures. This reflects appropriate staff training, satisfactory policies and procedures that are easily accessible, the use of tutorials and induction periods to raise students' awareness and suitable advertising. Safeguarding referrals made to college staff are promptly, sensitively and effectively handled. College support services play an important role in the early stages of safeguarding issues. Links with, and use of, relevant external agencies are good. The required checks of staff are managed well, with an appropriate central record. The college's approach to health and safety, internet safety, checks of work placements and physical security are all good.
  35. Students report that they are treated fairly and that there is mutual respect between students and staff. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly when they arise. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. The college properly assesses the impact of its policies and main activities in relation to equality. Efforts to attract under-represented groups have been successful in some areas. For example, in the football academy more than 30% of the students are now young women. This year the college has given priority to raising awareness about homophobia and has appointed a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender champion to support staff and students. Diversity is celebrated. Teams evaluate the promotion of equality and diversity in their course reviews in relation to recruitment and achievement and set targets for improvement. However, equality and diversity are not promoted sufficiently in lessons.
  36. The involvement of students and other users in decision making is outstanding. Students have many opportunities to make their views known from suggestion boxes and surveys to the formal 'student parliament'. They make a mature contribution and their views are taken into account in college planning. They have influenced the timing of AS-level examinations and the choice of course modules. Governors welcome their input to meetings to improve their understanding of the students' experience. The college works well with employers and uses their views in the design and delivery of courses. For instance, the health and social care steering group has promoted training in safeguarding for employees in Harrow nurseries and training for classroom assistants.
  37. Self-assessment processes are well considered and in nearly all cases lead to improvement. For example, the low recruitment and pass rates in accounting technicians courses have recently improved. However, despite considered

actions, the college has not yet reversed the significant decline in success rates on skills for life courses. Further changes have recently been made but it is too early to judge improvement. Self-assessment is evaluative, evidence based and largely accurate. The full involvement of staff in self-assessment has been fostered by managers, who encourage a self-critical culture. However, targets are not always sufficiently precise to guide improvement. Teams do not all make full routine use of readily-accessible data in analysing or reviewing progress.

38. Financial management is sound. Managers direct resources efficiently and sustainably and develop them well to support learning. Students and staff had a say in the recent refurbishment of facilities and design of new accommodation. The senior management team and governors regularly review a variety of efficiency indicators, such as average class sizes. Staff are well qualified for their roles. Almost all teachers have teaching qualifications and those who do not are working towards them. The staff development programme is well planned in response to the needs identified through lesson observations, appraisal or the demands of their roles.

## Subject areas

### Health, public services and care (employer responsive)

**Grade 1**

#### Context

39. The services to business department provides intermediate and advanced level Train to Gain programmes in health and social care, and in child development and well-being. The total number of learners on all Train to Gain programmes at the college is 508, with 164 learners enrolled on health and social care programmes. The programmes are supported by specialist staff in services to business, rather than using existing college teaching staff.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Train to Gain learners make very good progress and the very large majority achieve their qualifications in a timely manner, well ahead of national averages for this type of programme. Overall success rates have improved significantly in the last year to a very high level. No groups of learners are underachieving.
- The standard of learners' written work is very good. Work is well presented and portfolios contain good evidence for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Written work demonstrates that learners can link theory and practice. Their work contains self-reflection and evidence of progression. Teachers' feedback indicates how the learner can improve and there is an appropriate response to feedback by the learner.
- Learners acquire very good vocational skills. Assessors and employers work together to ensure that workshops are of a high quality and improve skills. Independent checking and reinforcement of learners' skills occur routinely, for instance through district nurses checking on the administration of eye drops and ear drops, and employers carrying out spot checks of learners' practice during care in clients' homes.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. The experienced and well-qualified teachers inspire and motivate learners through their workshop teaching. Learners share experiences and gain both personal and professional confidence. Teachers plan individual teaching sessions so that learners make progress and have their queries resolved. The college has identified the need for learners to contribute more fully to the evaluation of workshops.
- Tracking of learners' progress is excellent. Tutors produce helpful monthly reports for all learners. Employers are fully aware of the progress of their learners. Workplace managers use reports effectively during routine supervision meetings. Tutors provide additional guidance for learners who need it in a timely manner and complete individual learning plans regularly. Assessors have improved assessment plans to include detailed target setting.

- Employers' and learners' needs are very well met. College managers consult employers in the development of new courses to ensure that learners obtain relevant qualifications leading to employment. Workshops and assessment arrangements are flexible and held at convenient locations so that learners can attend regularly.
- Partnership work with employers is outstanding. The college has a wide range of employer contracts, many of which represent repeat business. Some care homes have had links with the college over many years and train all of their staff through the college. They speak highly of the quality of their learners' work and appreciate the college's emphasis on quality.
- Communication with employers is excellent. Strategies include meetings with assessors and customer liaison staff. Employers know that they can contact college staff at any time to have concerns or queries discussed.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Group support is provided in workshops and, when required, additional workshop time is used to provide individual support to ensure that learners' progress is maintained. Learners with special needs begin the assessment progress earlier so that they are not unduly pressurised by deadlines.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. There is a clear focus on quality. Staff are supported through regular meetings with managers. They have clear targets and direction for improvement and are motivated to achieve these. Quality improvement is at the heart of departmental activity and staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Staff contributed confidently and effectively to the inspection process despite their manager being on leave.
- Professional development arrangements are very good and have high priority. In addition to vocational training, to ensure that staff have current knowledge, some staff have received training in advice and guidance as well as training in managing difficult conversations. Safeguarding training is a priority for new and existing staff and is also organised for freelance staff. Professional development is systematically recorded.
- Data are used very effectively to improve learners' outcomes. Tutors' detailed tracking of learners' progress and managers closely monitoring targets set for assessors have contributed to higher timely success rates.

### **What does Stanmore College need to do to improve further?**

- Develop further ways of evaluating workshop provision to ensure that high standards of teaching and learning are maintained or improved.

## Science and mathematics

## Grade 2

### Context

40. The provision in science and mathematics includes AS- and A-level mathematics, further mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics; BTEC Extended Diploma in applied sciences, International Baccalaureate and GCSE biology. There are currently 457 enrolments of which 437 are full-time students; the majority of these are 16 to 18 years old. GCSE mathematics was inspected with the literacy and numeracy provision.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Nearly all courses routinely have good success rates with good attainment of high grades. Results in subjects such as A-level biology, physics and mathematics are outstanding. AS results have been good, although in a few subjects there was a dip to satisfactory levels in 2009/10. Extra support for AS classes is now in place and current AS students are progressing well.
- In 2009/10, students on A-level courses made significantly better progress than was expected from their starting point. The progress of AS-level students was in line with expectations, although there was some variation between subjects.
- Students acquire good practical skills. They enjoy their work and support each other well. This, together with the knowledge and wider skills they acquire, puts them in a good position to progress into employment. Students have a good rapport with staff. Attendance rates are high.
- Students feel extremely safe. They are aware of potential safeguarding problems and whom they should approach if they or their friends feel unsafe. Students stress that they are comfortable in this friendly environment and have not come across any bullying. Health and safety practices, particularly to ensure that students work safely in laboratories, are good.
- Teaching and learning are good. A departmental teaching and learning coach has assisted improvements in this aspect. Practical work in science is good. Use of learning technology is common, particularly in respect of interactive whiteboards, with effective presentations and links to the internet, for instance using video clips to make learning more interesting. However, questioning of students in class makes insufficient use of directed and evaluative questions.
- Learners' uptake of enrichment activities is good. Course-related initiatives, such as field trips, improve students' deeper understanding of their subject. The majority of students are well supported in their planning for higher education, but for a small number of vocational students employer links, such as work experience, are not yet fully developed.
- Tutorial provision is good. Tutors set challenging target grades for individual students, and adjust these in line with the students' performance on the course. Reports from academic staff contribute to effective individual reviews between students and their personal tutor. Senior staff review learners' progress



fortnightly. Group tutorials include constructive work on safeguarding, being healthy and equality and diversity.

- Learner support is good. Counselling, language support, mentoring, and other specific learning provision help students progress. The VLE is well used, both for college-wide topics, such as volunteering or healthy living, and for comprehensive subject-specific material which particularly helps students who miss a class. Students make good use of on-line communication systems.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers responded promptly to a dip in 2009/10 AS success rates, putting in place extra support which appears to be having a positive impact. Staff development is beneficial; teachers attend subject updates and managers have relevant training. Arrangements for cover when a member of staff is absent are efficient. Good resources include well-equipped laboratories, effective technicians and well-qualified knowledgeable staff.
- The way in which feedback from students is used for quality improvement purposes is outstanding. A departmental initiative gathers students' feedback on specific lessons. Students are clear that this is an effective process leading to real difference in classes and homework. Students also contribute to team meetings, college surveys, work with learner representatives and a 'learner parliament'. All of this helps create a positive relationship between students and the college.
- Self-assessment is good. All staff are involved in a constructive and properly reflective process. The accurate final report sets out appropriate general actions and targets. However, there are insufficient detailed targets, or regular use of data, to help with routine monitoring of improvement actions, including analysis of achievement by differing groups of students.

### **What does Stanmore College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning by encouraging staff to use more probing questions that require students to articulate their answers in more depth.
- Develop employer links, including work placements, to help students, particularly those on vocational courses, gain a better understanding of the requirements of their potential area of employment.
- Use detailed data, including analysis of equality and diversity, more effectively and routinely to ensure that improvement actions are having the desired impact on outcomes for all students.

## Literacy and numeracy

## Grade 4

### Context

41. Around 120 adults are studying part-time literacy courses from entry to advanced levels, with 20 adults on a similar range of numeracy courses. There are 80 students aged 16 to 18 and 24 adult students attend GCSE English courses, with similar numbers on GCSE mathematics courses. Students now take functional skills on their vocational courses, rather than key skills. Over 92% of students are from minority ethnic groups.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. The percentage of students gaining grades A\* to C in GCSE English and mathematics has steadily improved to satisfactory levels. However, success rates on adult literacy and numeracy courses have declined over a three-year period and are well below national averages. Success rates for 16- to 18-year-olds on key skills communication at level 2 declined to a low level in 2009/10, the final year in which they were taken.
- Students' progress is satisfactory. Students enjoy the safe learning environment. They increase their confidence in social interaction and communication in English. Attendance is good, although punctuality is often poor for younger students. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Many students progress to higher level English and mathematics courses or vocational training.
- The initial assessment process is satisfactory and clearly identifies students' existing skill levels in reading, writing and speaking. However, teachers do not use the results of these assessments sufficiently for lesson planning to meet individual needs. Students are not fully aware of their starting points or the steps they need to take to improve. They use learning records just to log work completed in lessons, not to reflect on targets met or to plan ahead.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers develop a good rapport with students, engaging and motivating them. However, they do not plan in sufficient detail to challenge all students fully. Planning often concentrates on activities to be completed at differing levels rather than skills to be developed. Teachers do not routinely use a wide range of activities, and rely too much on general feedback from the whole group to check progress.
- Better lessons are effective in improving skills. In these, students work enthusiastically on a range of activities, practising new skills and concepts in relevant everyday contexts. Teachers use differing explanations to ensure students of all abilities fully grasp new learning points. Feedback is constructive and students independently evaluate the progress they are making and steps they need to make to improve further.
- Poorer lessons do not help individual students effectively enough. In too many lessons tutors use a narrow range of teaching strategies and rely too much on

whole-group verbal explanation and dull and uninspiring paper-based activities. Teachers often give good verbal feedback to individuals but do not always give sufficiently-detailed, written, constructive feedback to advise students on how to improve.

- Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. Classrooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards, although these are often used solely by the teacher for presentations. Teachers are gaining confidence in using the intranet, with useful links to pertinent internet clips to enrich the learning environment, but this aspect is under developed. Accommodation is often cramped and limits group-work activities.
- Courses have been redesigned to address more effectively the needs of adult students. Students in the current year have good access to intensive day and evening provision leading to national qualifications which recognise their progress. However, not all learning materials are sufficiently adult, authentic and relevant to fully engage and promote learners' understanding and interest.
- Support for students is satisfactory. Teachers provide effective informal pastoral and academic support for students. Students with specific needs are routinely directed to college on-line material and specialists for more intensive support. An adult learning coordinator provides good information, advice and support on a range of issues to students attending evening courses. However, teachers do not plan in-class support effectively.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. New managers are properly concentrating on improving success rates, for instance by redesigning the curriculum offer. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this strategy. Staff are suitably qualified, but recent staff development has not focused sufficiently on improving teaching and learning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Students work well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. Data about the achievement rates of different ethnic groups are collected but targets to address differences have not yet been set at programme level. Schemes of work and lesson plans do not routinely include planning for the promotion of equality and diversity issues in lessons.
- The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Both teachers and students take part in course reviews and these link well with the curriculum area self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, although lessons are often over graded and areas for improvement in teaching and learning are not always recognised. Data are used insufficiently for detailed action planning at curriculum level.

### **What does Stanmore College need to do to improve further?**

- Make better use of initial and diagnostic assessment to set clear, measurable targets for the development of individuals' literacy and numeracy skills and to inform more detailed lesson planning. Involve students in recognising, recording and evaluating their own progress and setting new specific targets to help improve their success rates.

- Ensure all staff consistently plan stimulating and challenging learning activities to enable all students to participate fully and make good progress. Increase the use of authentic, relevant learning materials to engage students in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Make greater use of data to set more detailed targets for quality improvement. Ensure action plans are more precise and measurable so that progress can be much more tightly monitored to support managers in sharing and implementing good practice.

## Information about the inspection

42. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's Director of Quality Improvement, Learning and Teaching, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
43. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students and employers. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Stanmore College**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16–18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>				
Full-time learners	1,441	1,288	153	
Part-time learners	1,004	81	543	380
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>			
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2			
How well do learners progress?	2			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
How safe do learners feel?	2			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2			
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>			
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2			

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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