

# Colchester Institute

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130674

**Name of lead inspector:** William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 10 June 2011

**Type of provider:** General Further Education College

**Address:** Colchester Institute  
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## Information about the provider

1. Colchester Institute is a general further education college which is the largest provider of its kind in North Essex. In January 2010 Braintree College was merged with the Institute. The college has campuses in Sheepen Road, Colchester, in Braintree and in Clacton-on-Sea. The Sheepen Road campus offers a wide range of vocational further education and training programmes from foundation to advanced levels. In addition it has around 1500 higher education enrolments per year on vocational programmes from level four to master's degrees. The College at Braintree offers programmes mainly to 14 to 19 year olds, with a small adult offer, mainly in Skills for Life. The College at Clacton offers a range of vocational 14 to 19 training programmes, mainly at foundation and intermediate levels. Further operations are found in town-centre learning shops in Colchester and Dovercourt and in Colchester's art gallery, The Minories, and in an Engineering Training Centre to the west of Colchester. The vast majority of learners are white, but the percentage of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than that for the local population. The percentage of school leavers in Essex achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C in 2010 was very slightly above the England average at 54.6%.
2. As well as holding its own employer responsive contract, Colchester Institute is the lead partner and holder of the contract with the Skills Funding Agency for the Braintree Colchester and Tendring (BCT) consortium, which was formed in 2004. In 2009/10, around 8,000 learners studied at the college. There were around 480 work-based learners and 329 Train to Gain learners. The college's mission is "to meet the needs of customers through effective learning, teaching and development of skills".
3. The inspection took into account all of the FE provision offered by the college, including the employer responsive provision offered by BCT. Provision in engineering, construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, literacy, numeracy and ESOL and business, administration and law was inspected in depth.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Every Step Limited (information and communication technology (ICT))
  - Herts Regional College (employment)
  - Bedford College (environmental technologies)
  - JTL (construction)
  - Remit (construction)
  - SSE (construction)
  - WS Training Ltd (engineering)
  - Cskills (construction)

5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
- Mencap (learning for living and work)
  - Opportunities Through Technology (information technology users)
  - Princes Trust (community improvement and personal development)
  - Braintree – YMCA Foyer (numeracy)
  - Enthuse (caring for children)
  - Springlands (childcare)
  - ABA Training (business administration)
  - Academy of learning (health and social care)
  - Career track (business administration)
  - Catten College (hairdressing)
  - Colchester hospital (health and social care)
  - Easi Hairdressing Academy (hairdressing)
  - Every Step Ltd (business administration)
  - Independent Windscreen Academy (automotive glazing)
  - St Lukes Hospital (customer service)
  - Universal Training Services (cleaning and security)
  - DB Training (information technology)

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10</b>
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14-16  Further education (16-18)  Entry to Employment (E2E)	540 learners  3,646 full-time learners 871 part-time learners  174 learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)	909 full-time learners 2,295 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships	329 learners 480 apprentices
<b>Adult and community learning</b>	144 learners

## 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>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Construction, planning and the built environment	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	3
Business, administration and law	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. Colchester Institute is a good college. The college has shown a good capacity to improve through its steady and sustained improvements since the last inspection. Learners enjoy the college and feel safe. Those on foundation and intermediate programmes achieve well. The standard of learners' work is generally good and most learners develop knowledge and skills which prepare them well for employment. Learners on advanced-level and work-based learning programmes achieve satisfactory results. Learners make satisfactory progress.
7. The quality of provision is good overall. Assessment is particularly effective in securing learners' attainment of their goals. Teaching is at least satisfactory and mostly good. The quality of training and assessment for work-based learning is variable. The range of courses is good and learners benefit from the partnerships that the college has with a wide range of organisations,

particularly employers. Good care, support and guidance help learners to stay on their courses.

8. Good leadership and effective management of change have enabled the college to achieve improvements at above the national rate. The college prioritises safeguarding and promotes equality and diversity appropriately. Learners' views are listened to well and are acted on to improve the provision. Although the self-assessment report is accurate, the college's quality improvement arrangements, including BCT, are satisfactory.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for learners on long programmes have risen steadily over the last three years, with a more rapid pace of improvement than the national rate. Success rates for foundation and intermediate programmes are above the average and for learners aged 14 to 16 are high. Overall success rates on work-based provision are satisfactory.
- Learners make satisfactory progress. Progression between levels at the college and to higher education is satisfactory. Learners develop good skills for future employment and feel safe at college. They have good opportunities to be involved in activities which contribute to both the college and the local community.
- Regular and thorough assessment alongside at least satisfactory and often good teaching support learners to attain their learning goals. Teachers use a wide range of strategies well in the majority of lessons. However, they do not always plan and set clear objectives well enough or challenge advanced level learners sufficiently to reach their full potential. The lesson observation process lacks some rigour.
- The quality of training and assessment for work-based learners varies too much across the consortium partners. Employers' involvement in training and reviews of progress is limited. While some good assessment practice exists, it is not widespread across the provision.
- The college's good range of programmes meets the needs of learners and employers well. Programmes are aligned well to local and regional employment and to opportunities for further study. Good provision in the community and for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners supports social and educational inclusion well.
- The college has good partnerships with employers, schools, the local university, the local authority and local area planning groups. It makes effective use of its partnerships to inform the development of the curriculum and to promote social and educational inclusion and progression opportunities. Links with employers are used well to inform and enrich the curriculum and to enhance staff development.
- Care and support are good and help learners to stay on their courses and attend regularly. A wealth of useful information and advice is provided on a wide range of topics. Information and guidance about courses benefits from regular review and helps learners to get onto the right courses to meet their

needs and interests. Although tutorials support learners well, their targets do not always focus enough on them gaining the highest grades possible.

- The good leadership and management, including good governance, have helped the college to maintain steady improvements while successfully undertaking a significant merger that has enhanced the college's strategic aim to bring vocational learning to learners in North East Essex.
- Learners' views are listened to particularly well in a wide range of forums. Their suggestions have led to improved curriculum delivery and design, improvements to safety measures and to recreational and food outlets in the college. Learners play an important role in college governance, and work with managers to ensure that surveys are written in accessible language so that more learners can participate in college decision making.
- Good safeguarding arrangements ensure that learners are well protected and know that well trained staff will support them with any safeguarding issues. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. They are well promoted across the college and in group tutorials. The college has closed the achievement gap between different groups of learners. However, equality and diversity are not yet fully embedded in lessons.
- Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. The college identifies accurately significant areas for improvement, and successfully implements the necessary action plans. However, the course and curriculum reviews that describe the issues, and report on progress are insufficiently focused on measurable milestones and timely completion of the actions. The self-assessment report is accurate, but overlong and insufficiently evaluative.

### **What does Colchester Institute need to do to improve further?**

- Improve apprentice success rates and the consistency of work-based learning by setting challenging individual targets for each partner organisation and share good practice to improve the quality of learning and support.
- Improve the quality of lessons by implementing a more robust lesson observation system that informs staff development. Ensure that teachers set clear and specific learning objectives, that learning is checked regularly using probing questions and that activities are sufficiently challenging, particularly at advanced level, so that all learners achieve their full potential.
- Make better use of prior attainment data and initial assessment to inform targets for learners so that their progress towards fulfilling their potential can be measured more accurately.
- Produce a more succinct and evaluative self-assessment report that makes better use of data to inform quality improvement strategies to enable teachers and managers to measure their performance against more specific and time-bound targets for improvement.

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

### **What learners like:**

- the safe and secure sites and emphasis on health and safety
- being treated fairly and like adults
- encouraging and supportive staff
- the wide range of enrichment activities available
- the vocational experiences on offer
- the help they receive to develop their confidence
- the opportunity to influence college life
- help from staff towards achieving their personal targets.

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

- the high cost of printing in the library
- more vegetarian options in the canteen
- some overlong lessons
- better access to computers and a faster IT network
- a greater focus on learning in a few lessons
- greater clarity in the feedback from some teachers.

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

### **What employers like:**

- the support provided by assessors
- the improved self-esteem of employees
- the college's responsiveness to requests for information about courses
- assessors' flexibility and willingness to meet employers' needs
- the detailed information they receive about their learners' progress.

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

- more consistency in the expectations of assessors
- better timing of some assessments.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. The college has maintained a steady increase in success rates at a higher rate than that found nationally, while going through a period of significant change and disruption. Staff morale remains high. Good progress has been made against the issues raised at the previous inspection. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 have improved following appropriate interventions. Quality improvements to underperforming courses and retention, have been implemented successfully. Targets are set at curriculum and strategic level and the college meets or exceeds the majority of these. Governors challenge the college well to continue to improve learners' experience, and to set college priorities realistically within the local context. Although the self-assessment report is broadly accurate, it is overly long, with much distracting and unnecessary detail. Formal reviews that inform self-assessment are not focused sufficiently on measureable targets. Financial management is good and monitored very effectively by the governing body.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

10. Overall success rates on long programmes are above national averages and have steadily improved over the last three years. In that period, the rate of improvement has been greater than the national rate. Success rates for the substantial proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 at foundation and intermediate levels are high. Learners in receipt of additional learning support and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have success rates which are much higher than the college average. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are also high and their progression into the college is good. Retention has improved in the current year at every level and is above national averages at foundation and intermediate level and in line with the average at advanced level. The college has succeeded in closing the achievement gap between different ethnic groups over the past three years. The standard of most learners' work is good.
11. Learners generally make satisfactory progress overall. Value added data show that advanced level learners make the progress expected based on their prior attainment. The proportion of learners on advanced level programmes achieving high grades is lower than the national average. Learners' progression between levels of study within the college is satisfactory and progression to higher education is improving and above the college target. Overall success rates in work-based learning provision are satisfactory and are slightly above national averages in 2009/10. Success rates completed within agreed timescales in Train to Gain provision are also satisfactory.
12. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on advanced programmes improved substantially in 2009/10 but remain below the national average. Overall success rates for both key skills and functional skills are well below the average in



2009/10. In-year attendance is satisfactory and is in line with the college target.

13. Many programmes increase learners' employability by increasing their confidence, knowledge and skills. Apprentices enjoy their programmes and develop good skills in the workplace. Learners feel safe both in the college and in the workplace. Staff promote safe working practices well. The college promotes health and well-being satisfactorily and provides a number of themed activities on healthy eating, drug awareness and sexual health. The college is also successful in raising awareness of mental health issues. Many subject areas engage learners in raising money for charities both in local community settings and abroad. Learners are also involved in contributing to the life of the college through the student union and learner voice forums.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

14. Almost all lessons are at least satisfactory and teaching is good in the majority of subjects. In the current year, the strong focus on improving teaching, including through increased sharing of good practice, along with revisions to the lesson observation scheme, is helping teachers to improve their lessons. Lesson observations are used constructively to identify what teachers need to do to improve. However, grades awarded as part of the process do not always give an accurate reflection of the quality of teaching.
15. Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and make good use of information and learning technology in the majority of lessons. Many teachers use their considerable experience and good industry links to make the majority of lessons interesting and relevant, particularly practical lessons. Using good resources, including realistic working environments and by incorporating relevant tasks, teachers help learners to develop good vocational skills in most subjects. However, insufficient planning including the setting of clear and specific objectives relative to what needs to be learnt hinders the effectiveness of a minority of lessons. Teachers do not provide enough challenge for advanced level learners to ensure that they make consistently good progress.
16. The increased use of functional skills teachers and vocational teachers located within subject teams, delivering functional skills, is working well. However, teaching of key skills has not been fully effective and too often opportunities to promote the development of literacy and numeracy have been missed. Recent training for all teachers in the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons has helped them develop more effective strategies to bring equality themes alive in lessons. Some are more expert at this than others and, overall, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.
17. Regular and thorough assessment takes place and strongly supports learners' attainment of their learning goals. Extra time is provided where needed to ensure that assessments are completed fully to a satisfactory standard. Initial assessment provides a sound basis for identifying learners' needs. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together to ensure that learners with

additional needs succeed particularly well. Arrangements to monitor learners' progress are well established and largely effective.

18. The quality of training and assessment for learners on employment-based provision varies too much across consortium partners but is more consistent within the college's direct delivery. Many employers are closely involved in the process of planning and reviewing training, although a few have little or no involvement. Assessment and progress reviews have improved considerably for some apprentices, for example within the college's construction department, but good assessment practice is not yet widespread across the provision.
19. The college offers a comprehensive range of courses and provision. It provides courses for around 550 14 to 16 year old school pupils, an extensive range of provision and progression opportunities in all subject areas except agriculture, an extensive apprenticeship provision and HE courses. Programmes are aligned well to local and regional employment and to opportunities for further study. Good community provision and provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners supports social and educational inclusion well. The college is effective in helping teenagers not in training or employment to gain skills and to enhance their employment prospects. The college provides a good range of opportunities for personal and social development, including visits and trips, sports activities and charity events.
20. The college has a good range of effective partnerships with employers, schools, the local university, the local authority and local area planning groups. It makes good use of these to inform the development of the curriculum and to promote social and educational inclusion and progression opportunities. Links with employers are used well in many areas, such as engineering, business and media to inform and enrich the curriculum and to enhance staff development. Partnerships with education partners and community groups are used well to engage learners from disadvantaged areas and to provide progression routes for learners.
21. Learners receive good pastoral care and a wealth of information and advice on a wide range of topics during their time at college. The 'one-stop-shop' approach at the Colchester campus, incorporating a wide range of services, works well and is valued by learners; a similar approach is being developed at the Braintree campus. Liaison with external agencies including within the community and with parents and carers is beneficial to all. Good careers advice is offered but its full effectiveness is uncertain as insufficient analysis of learners' destinations takes place. Relevant information and advice are regularly reviewed to ensure that learners are fully aware of the content and demands of courses. More stringent application of entry requirements has been influential in the increased retention of current learners in some subjects.
22. Strategies to improve group tutorials are proving successful; useful topics support learners' personal and social development. Themed weeks such as 'Respect Week' raise awareness well. Good quality resources, for example in managing finances and in promoting equality and diversity, are provided for teachers and used effectively. Individual tutorials are regular and supportive,

making mostly good use of individual learning plans incorporating targets with relevant timescales. In a few cases, the review of targets is not formal enough and the focus on gaining high grades is not always sufficiently explicit.

23. Support for employment-based learners varies considerably; it is good for some, particularly in the college's direct delivery contract, and reviews make sure that they are on course to complete within the time allocated. However, targets set for others are too vague and open ended, and sometimes reappear on successive reviews without any explanation. Few apprentices have personal targets such as for attendance and punctuality, even when these clearly need to be improved.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

24. A very clear mission to provide vocational learning that matches employment needs in North East Essex is well understood by staff, and informs developments in the recent merger. The merger was managed well, resulting in improvements for both colleges, including increased learner safety and further sharing of good practice. The college identifies accurately areas of underperformance, and intervenes appropriately to improve them. For example, retention has increased following specific interventions. The college sets itself challenging targets, most of which it meets or exceeds. Overall, curriculum management is good.
25. Management of BCT has been strengthened recently through the restructuring of the board with clearer accountability, although the impact of this has not yet been fully realised. Communications are good. Partners are well informed about issues relating to the consortium and national and local issues relevant to work-based learning. They value the good support they receive, especially the regular partnership meetings.
26. Governors are well informed, experienced and have an appropriately wide range of skills, alongside a clear understanding of the college's responsibility to learners. They interrogate college plans rigorously, and are diligent in their role to mitigate risk to the college. They are involved fully in setting and agreeing strategic objectives and targets. They link with specific college areas, and provide challenging questions about the progress staff make in fulfilling their improvement plans. Presentations on educational matters are an integral part of board meetings, and governors provide good mentoring and training to new members, especially the two student governors.
27. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The college complies with government expectations and holds a comprehensive single central record. Safeguarding is prioritised with well considered policies and procedures in place. A governor, senior manager and safeguarding officers are appropriately trained and designated to ensure the safety of learners. Vulnerable learners and others identified as at risk are monitored and supported well. Prompt action is taken when safeguarding issues are identified. The college maintains close and productive links with other agencies involved in safeguarding and makes good

use of Essex County Council to ensure that staff and partners receive training. All staff understand their responsibilities, including for e-safety. Access to the main college sites is rigorously controlled.

28. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All staff and governors have received relevant training. Policies and procedures are in place and assessed for equality impact. The implementation of the single equality scheme is monitored closely. The college responds well to factors related to its rural and coastal environment, through effective transport arrangements, and provision across North East Essex. Data is analysed for differences between groups of learners. Over the last three years, the achievement gap between black minority groups and other learners has reduced from 11% below college rates to 2% below. The data show no other significant gaps. The group tutorial programme promotes equality and diversity well. A 'Respect' week at the beginning of the year helped learners to devise class rules that promote equality and diversity. However, despite extensive staff training, equality and diversity are not yet embedded sufficiently in lessons.
29. The college listens carefully to learners at course reviews, quality forums, focus groups and at a regular Principal's Question Time. Their views bring about many improvements to curriculum design and delivery, social events, and resources. Learners have redesigned surveys that are now more relevant and offered at two reading levels and in Maketon. Two student governors and representatives of the students' union ensure learners' concerns are transmitted to managers. Employers and stakeholders make their views known informally but systematic collection of their views is in its infancy.
30. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The college has identified accurately significant areas of underperformance and development needs, and in most cases, brought about improvements, for example in success rates for those aged 16 to 18, retention rates and the use of information learning technology. The self-assessment process is inclusive and informed by frequent meetings at course, curriculum and whole college level on a termly basis. While this identifies needed improvements, the recording of these meetings is insufficiently focused, and records lack clear timelines and stages for monitoring progress towards outcomes. When data is provided it is often overcomplicated, and difficult to use. The good and frequent communication mitigates the impact of this on learners' attainment, but insufficient evaluation and use of data limits the effectiveness of the self-assessment report at all levels. Within BCT the monitoring of the quality of provision over-emphasises audits of paperwork, health and safety and staff qualifications and pays too little attention to learners' experience. It takes insufficient account of partners' own systems. The self assessment report is very descriptive about systems and processes, and says little about the quality of provision and learners' experience. It is not informed by the partners' internal observations and other useful evidence about performance.
31. Value for money is good. The college has maintained steady improvements in success rates through a period of major disruption. Resources are used efficiently and procurement is controlled carefully. Financial health is good and

the college manages its finances and staffing well. It has had a policy for sustainability and the environment since 2009, and uses sustainable practices wherever possible.

## Subject areas

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

### Grade 2

#### Context

32. The college provides courses in engineering from foundation level through to Higher National Diploma. Currently 368 learners are enrolled on full-time courses whilst 480 study a part-time. Two thirds of learners are aged between 16 and 18. The majority of the engineering courses are based at the Colchester campus. Some motor vehicle provision is delivered at the Braintree and Clacton campuses. A further 118 learners aged 14 to 16 take mainly motor vehicle related qualifications.

#### Key findings

- Success rates on most intermediate courses and for the foundation performing engineering operations course are high. However, success rates are low for some advanced learners. Learners develop good vocational and practical skills in college workshops. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and show an improvement over previous years. College data suggest that the retention of current learners has improved.
- The standard of learners' practical work is good. Teaching and support staff encourage the highest of standards in class, and learners work with care and precision within all practical activities. Complex fabricated assemblies are completed to very high standards. Learners demonstrate a wide range of skills using machinery and hand tools to manufacture detailed assessment pieces in engineering workshops. Learners make satisfactory progress.
- Learners feel safe in all college environments and have a good awareness of health and safety practices. Personal protective equipment is provided for learners either by the college or by their employers. Learners' knowledge, understanding and application of safe working practices are good.
- Teaching, learning and training are good in most practical sessions and a few theory lessons. The better lessons are well structured, using varied activities and good learning resources with teachers planning carefully to meet learners' different abilities. In weaker lessons teachers do not make effective use of questions to test knowledge and understanding. The use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) to support learners' studies is underdeveloped.
- Practical learning resources are particularly good in fabrication and welding and good in motor vehicle workshops at Colchester. Mechanical workshop machinery and equipment satisfactorily meets the needs of learners and teachers. Motor vehicle resources at the Braintree campus are currently being updated. Some teaching rooms at Braintree have yet to be equipped with interactive teaching aids.
- The college offers a satisfactory range of courses involving specialist skills including electrical, fabrication and welding, motor vehicle, furniture manufacture and electrical installation. Learners are able to study at a range of

levels with progression opportunities available up to level 5. Some learners have advanced to this level. Many learners achieve additional qualifications to supplement their main aim.

- The colleges' partnerships with employers, suppliers and schools are very strong. Some partners supply materials and equipment and offer training opportunities to teaching staff. As a result of effective links with local schools some 118 learners are studying vocational and diploma courses.
- Learners receive good vocational and pastoral guidance and support. When needs are recognised swift actions are taken to ensure that appropriate support is received. Learners feel respected and cared for and they value the support and respond positively.
- Leadership and management are good. Communications are good and staff attend regular meetings which focus well on specific issues and areas for improvement. Good practice is shared across the sites. Demanding targets for improving success rates and lesson observation outcomes are set at all levels. Data is used very effectively, particularly to monitor and manage learner performance. A governor directly linked to engineering takes an active role in supporting the future direction of the provision.
- Staff have had appropriate safeguarding and equality and diversity training and their awareness is very good. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory and understood by learners. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively through curriculum tutorial sessions and within the college environment. The performance of learners receiving additional learning support is broadly in line with those who do not.
- The college has effective arrangements to collect and analyse the views and opinions of its users. Many improvements suggested by learners have been investigated and successfully implemented. Learner representatives are welcomed to development meetings where their views are valued and respected.
- Internal verification is satisfactory. Verification is well planned and decisions are recorded systematically. Internal verifiers and assessors meet termly to standardise their practice. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but is too long and unwieldy. Although key strengths and areas for improvement are included many statements are descriptive rather than judgemental.

### **What does Colchester Institute need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the success rates on programmes at advanced level by closely monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in theory classes and increasing the numbers of learners who successfully achieve all of their qualification aims.
- Further develop the use of the VLE across all campuses to enable all learners to take advantage of the wide range of support materials available to them.
- Support staff in developing their questioning techniques within lessons so that they can more effectively assess learners understanding during theory sessions.

- Ensure that information learning technologies and replacement vehicles continue to be introduced into the Braintree site to enable learners to be trained in the use of modern diagnostic systems and to prepare them more effectively for the workplace.



## Construction, planning and the built environment

## Grade 2

### Context

33. Slightly more than 130 apprentices are on work-based construction programmes at intermediate and advanced levels. Trades offered are in plumbing, which has the majority of learners, carpentry and joinery, and brickwork. In addition the college trains and assesses learners for other providers. Learners attend the college on day release and are visited by assessors in the workplace.

### Key findings

- Overall success rates for framework completion in 2009/10 are well above the national average with most apprentices completing their course in the planned timescale. The substantial number of plumbing apprentices achieved significantly above the average. In-year data show further improvement in apprentices' success rates. Learners make good progress. Demanding targets for achievement are set and monitoring documents show that the majority of learners should achieve on time. Several have completed early.
- Learners work is of a consistently high standard. Learners are given responsibility for completing challenging tasks in the workplace, while being supported well by their employers. They demonstrate good levels of background knowledge in their trades and they take good care to protect customers' premises using dustsheets and protective screens where needed. Learners demonstrate their well-developed customer service skills in their interactions with their peers and clients.
- Learners feel safe. They wear appropriate personal protective equipment in the college and in the workplace and are looked after well if working away from home. Safeguarding features prominently in induction to the college. However, safeguarding and equality and diversity are not adequately reinforced during reviews of progress or in lessons, and learners only have a satisfactory knowledge of both.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their time at the college benefiting from high-quality lessons taught by occupationally-competent teachers. They use a good variety of activities to engage learners and maintain their interest. Training in the workplace is good with employers ensuring that learners benefit from a variety of activities which helps them develop the range of skills needed for assessment.
- Learning resources are very good. Workshops are modern, spacious and well equipped. Technology, including the VLE is used well to enhance learning. The overwhelming majority of assessment is undertaken in the workplace and is very good. Assessors are responsive to learners' needs and frequently travel long distances to visit sites. Portfolios have been refined to reflect learners' competence well.
- Most learners undertake an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills before they start their training. The results are not consistently entered

onto learning plans, which are too general and do not adequately identify learners starting points or record their progress.

- The college meets the needs of employers and the community well. It is responsive to employer requests and many of them use the college for commercial courses and other government funded programmes to up-skill their workforce. The range of apprenticeship opportunities in construction is satisfactory. Opportunities for progression are good, with the college offering degree and chartered institute of building qualifications. Learners receive good support to find work and many switch from full- to part-time courses.
- Partnerships are satisfactory. School pupils in years 10 and 11 attend the college for construction training and have good progression onto full-time courses and apprenticeships. Good links with the University of Essex help those wishing to progress to higher education.
- The operational management of work-based provision is good. The ambition of the provision is well articulated in the college's self-assessment. New programmes are being considered to help meet employers' needs and to attract a more diverse group of learners. Management at consortium level is less effective, with responsibility for data and self-assessment unclear.
- Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Staff are subject to criminal record bureau checks and appropriate recruitment checks are carried out. Learners, many of whom are under 18, are generally aware of their rights and responsibilities, although progress reviews and lessons do not adequately check their knowledge and understanding.
- The college has undertaken activities to promote construction to female learners, but this has yet to have a significant impact on overall numbers. Currently there is only one female construction apprentice.
- Responsibilities for self-assessing the quality of work-based learning in construction are unclear. The consortium report covers the BCT partnership overall and features only a short paragraph on construction. Performance data and other evidence did not support the self-assessed grade for work-based construction provision.

### **What does Colchester Institute need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the initial completion and use of individual learning plans to effectively record learners starting point and progress towards completion. Include in the plans results of initial assessment and projected completion dates for the different aspects of the apprenticeship framework to improve learners' progress.
- Improve the checking of learners' understanding of safeguarding and equality and diversity during progress reviews and lessons. Use teaching techniques such as open questions and scenarios which explore common misconceptions and traits to improve learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the clarity of self-assessment, use up-to date work-based learning data and feedback from users to inform judgements. Ensure that action plans include clear targets and responsibilities for monitoring to drive forward improvements.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

## Grade 2

### Context

34. Currently 563 learners attend courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy from foundation to advanced level. Of these 525 are full-time and 471 are aged 16 to 18. Learners are predominantly female and the majority follow intermediate programmes. In addition, 20 full-time learners attend courses in complementary therapies and 66 learners aged 14 to 16 are studying an introductory hairdressing and beauty course at foundation level.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good overall. Beauty therapy qualifications have high success rates with some outstanding rates at intermediate and advanced levels. Intermediate hairdressing is satisfactory. At foundation level success rates on the schools' provision is outstanding, but it is low for 16 to 18 year-old learners.
- The development of learners' practical skills in hairdressing and beauty therapy is good. Learners enjoy their studies and undertake treatments confidently and efficiently within commercial time scales. They demonstrate good customer care and collaborative working skills, which equips them for employment in the industry. In-year attendance and in-year retention on some foundation level courses are low.
- Learners feel safe at the college and welcome the role of identity badge checks by security staff. Staying safe is a topic in the group tutorial scheme. Safe working practices are reinforced by teachers and competently demonstrated by learners in practical sessions. Learners are involved in working with a cancer charity and take part in other charitable events.
- Teaching and learning are good, particularly in practical classes. The vocational expertise of teachers enhances students' learning and in turn their acquisition of vocational skills. Learning activities are well planned and students actively participate in lessons. Some teachers prepare extension activities for learners who complete their work early. In advanced level classes learners are challenged to develop their higher-level reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- The planning and review of learners' progress is good. Planning for the timely completion of assessment is effective and learners are able to demonstrate their learning in practical sessions. Progress monitoring records show that the vast majority of learners are on target to successfully complete their qualifications. Feedback from teachers is constructive and developmental. Some learners commented that they would like more clients in order to practise their skills and complete assessments.
- Resources and equipment are of industry standard. Teachers are developing their ILT skills and associated new resources but acknowledge that they are at different stages of their development and proficiency. Sharing of good practice in the use of ILT is well established in the curriculum area and teachers are provided with a wide range of staff development opportunities.

- The range of courses is appropriate, providing learners with sufficient progression opportunities. Progression between levels of study is satisfactory. Learners are involved in a wide range of extra curricular activities that extend their knowledge and skills associated with the hairdressing and beauty therapy industry such as opportunities to attend a wide range of additional training courses, visits to trade events, student trips and competition work, all of which they enjoy and value.
- Learners enjoy their lessons and receive good support from vocational teachers. This is demonstrated by in-class support and the progress made by learners in their completion of assessments. Learners feel they have a strong voice in the curriculum, and changes have been made to consultation cards and timetables following feedback. Student representatives play an active role in the college board of study.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers take effective action to improve success rates and apply monitoring procedures. They have a clear sense of the post-merger vision for the area and have a strong aspiration for learners to succeed. They lead by example, for example at merger there was an exchange of managers between sites which enabled the sharing of practice and standardisation of procedures, and paved the way for teaching staff to undertake cross-site peer observations. There is a feeling of ownership and pride from staff from across the sites and a sense of being a team.
- Staff help to raise learners' awareness and promotion of equality and diversity. Learners are helped to develop an understanding of their responsibilities, to recognise equality and diversity in employment and to challenge stereotyping.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Actions taken by curriculum staff have improved the teaching and learning profile, the timely completion of assessments and a strengthened approach to responding to learners' views. However the self-assessment report does not sufficiently acknowledge the differences in intermediate level success rates between hairdressing and beauty therapy and the weaker performance of some foundation level courses.

### **What does Colchester Institute need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the retention on intermediate hairdressing and on all foundation programmes through close monitoring of attendance at individual reviews thereby bringing the success rate in line with that of intermediate beauty therapy.
- Improve learners' access to a client base that is maintained throughout the period of study by developing strategies and strengthening marketing to increase the numbers of clients.

## Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

## Grade 3

### Context

35. Currently 832 learners are enrolled on courses, of which 474 attend literacy and numeracy and 358 attend ESOL courses. Courses are provided at main college sites on a full- and part-time basis. Most learners are aged over 19 years. Learners aged 16 to 18 attend functional skills in mathematics and English.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on some courses are low but improving. Success rates on entry level ESOL and some numeracy courses are below national averages. More recently, pass rates on courses have improved significantly.
- Learners make satisfactory progress in lessons and develop an appropriate range of skills including ICT, everyday numeracy and literacy and language skills. The progress of some learners is affected by work not being tailored to their individual ability; being either too complex or too easy to enable progression. Learners produce a high standard of work.
- Learners feel safe and enjoy their learning. Safety is reinforced well in lessons. Safety posters and learners own work on health and safety contribute effectively to their learning. Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding arrangements.
- Learners develop a wide range of skills to prepare them for everyday life and work. Learners plan, budget for, and attend, outings in the community further developing everyday life and work skills. Some learners are involved in enterprise activities, making and selling products at the college.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but there is insufficient good and better teaching. Some lessons are not sufficiently planned to meet all learners' needs and they focus insufficiently on skill development. Better lessons are challenging and interesting.
- Information learning technology (ILT) is used well in lessons to support learners' understanding of key topics. Demonstrations using the internet and social networking sites further enable learners to work independently and to develop research skills.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough. However, individual learning plans do not always record sufficiently precise learning targets, and they vary significantly in quality. Many learners have the same learning goals despite their initial starting points. Reviews are often too vague for the college to measure learner progress effectively.
- The monitoring of learners' progress is insufficient. The college introduced a system for monitoring learners' test results but there is no link between these and the monitoring of learning required to ensure that learners are successful in achieving their qualifications.

- The range of provision is good and enrichment is very good. Learners frequently develop and reinforce their learning through the planning of, and attendance at events and local places of interest. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL are provided from entry to intermediate levels.
- Partnership working is satisfactory. Links with referral agencies and schools are used effectively to recruit learners to programmes. Participation in local and national initiatives has enabled the college to secure funding for additional learning resources.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors check that learners are not experiencing any problems and help them respond to letters and to complete job applications. Support staff work effectively with tutors and learners in class.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions taken to improve the provision after merger are good. Team working and staff development are particularly effective in promoting the use of ILT in lessons and sharing best practice. Retention and attendance are monitored effectively and success rates are improving.
- Self-assessment is inclusive and broadly in line with inspection findings. However, the college's own observations of teaching and learning made insufficient evaluative judgments on learning and skill development.

### **What does Colchester Institute need to do to improve further?**

- Set and monitor individual learning targets that accurately reflect learners' current skills so that they achieve challenging learning goals and qualifications.
- Ensure that all lessons are planned with individualised learning objectives informed by learning plans so that tutors can accurately assess the impact that resources and learning activities have on meeting the range of learner abilities in class.
- Extend the use of the progress monitoring tool to include the monitoring of achievement of individual learning plan goals to ensure that any barriers to learners' progress are accurately identified and timely support is provided to successfully complete qualifications.
- Ensure that observations of teaching and learning make sufficient judgments on learning and skill development to identify clearly strengths and areas for improvement and staff development needs.

## Business, administration and law

## Grade 2

### Context

36. The subject area currently has 731 learners, of which 464 are female. Courses range from foundation level to professional and postgraduate qualifications. One hundred and forty-nine learners have declared a disability. Courses take place primarily at Colchester with the majority of the remaining courses taking place at Braintree.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are very good for national vocational qualification in accounting from intermediate to level 4 at Colchester. However, at Braintree the success rates for similar courses are satisfactory. Success rates for the national certificate in business at Colchester are very high. Current in-year retention on the majority of courses shows significant improvement. Attendance is satisfactory.
- The progress learners make in developing a better understanding of business accounts is generally good in class. In some lessons they are encouraged to develop their own research skills for local businesses. In others classes peer assessments are used effectively to enhance the learning experience.
- Learners feel very safe. They appreciate the effective security at all campuses. Lecturers have very good awareness of their responsibilities and procedures to safeguard learners.
- Learners' economic well-being is effectively developed. Business skills are developed very well through the college's Business Career Academy which provides opportunities for learners to extend their skills through internships and business mentoring.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners generally make good progress in lessons. Teachers use a wide range of activities to engage learners' attention. In one class learners engaged enthusiastically in a debate exploring arguments for and against fair trade. However, a minority of less effective lessons were too teacher-led with little involvement from the learners.
- Teachers use ILT effectively in the classroom to enhance learning. However, the use of the college's VLE is underdeveloped. Teachers make only limited reference to the use of the VLE in schemes of work and learners do not view it as a valuable resource.
- The department provides very good enrichment for learners. Learners have the opportunity to participate in activities, which enhances their understanding of business. The college organises trips and visits to local businesses as well as trips abroad. Additionally learners in the Business Career Academy complete a six week internship and are provided with a business mentor and attend Guru lectures.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Support is particularly effective for those learners with specific needs. Learners are offered support

with their work if they are having any difficulties. Meetings take place at the end of each semester to monitor learners' progress. Action plans are put in place for learners who have underperformed.

- Good leadership and management supported a smooth transition in the recent merger. Regular meetings and staff development activities take place with staff from all sites. Some staff teach on both sites to ensure consistency and standardisation at course level.
- Safeguarding and equality and diversity are good. Risk assessments are undertaken for all trips and clear guidelines and ground rules are set out at the start of the programme. Equality and diversity are covered well as part of the group tutorial calendar. The college took effective action to redress the underachievement of white males on the business national certificate. The target of exceeding the national average was met before the target date.

### **What does Colchester Institute need to do to improve further?**

- Increase attendance by setting and monitoring targets, for persistently low attending learners. Work more closely with parents to promote and celebrate regular attendance.
- Increase the use of the VLE for all courses within the department so that all learners are able to access fully the range of learning resources.
- Implement strategies to improve the success rates of lower performing courses by sharing good teaching practices across college sites.



## Information about the inspection

37. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Director of quality and operations (East), 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 bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
38. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners 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)**  
**Colchester Institute**

**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	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>					
Full-time learners	3225	0	2573	652	0
Part-time learners	5013	459	1803	1732	1019
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2				
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	2 3				
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>	3				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>				
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
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?	2				
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?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
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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