

K College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Information about the provider

1. K College was formed in April 2010 by the merger of West Kent and South Kent Colleges. Of the five main centres, two large campuses are located in Tonbridge and Folkestone and there are three others in Dover, Ashford and Tunbridge Wells. In 2010/11 there were more than 18,000 enrolments at the college, comprising over 5,300 from students aged 16 to 18 and around 13,000 from adults. Over 950 apprentices and 3,000 learners on Train to Gain were on work-based provision and 450 pupils aged 14 to 16 took part-time vocational courses. Students under 18 years of age constitute around 60% of the enrolments on long courses. The majority of adult learners are on part-time programmes. The college offers programmes in 14 of the 15 subject areas and the provision ranges from entry level through to undergraduate study. Almost a third of the learners take funded further education courses in foundation learning. In addition, substantial numbers take programmes in health and care, retail and commercial enterprise, leisure and tourism, arts and media, and business and administration.
2. The college serves a wide region of west and south Kent which is diverse, socio-economically, and has areas of affluence alongside more deprived rural, coastal and urban communities. For example, around 70% of the working age population are economically active in Dover, Tonbridge and Malling compared to around 90% in Sevenoaks. The south coast towns have higher unemployment and declining populations, when compared with the west Kent area. Literacy and numeracy levels are low in south Kent and the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training has recently increased. Educational attainment in Kent varies considerably. In the Tonbridge area, around 89% of Year 11 pupils gain five A* to C GCSE grades. However, five A* to C grade pass rates are at least 10 percentage points lower in Ashford, Dover and Shepway. The college vision is 'to inspire our learners to realise their full potential and equip themselves with the skills and knowledge they need for a successful working life'.
3. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - The Childcare Company (health and social care)
 - Eglantine Catering Ltd (hospitality)
 - Gateway Care Training Ltd (health and social care)
 - Premier Training (sport and leisure)
 - Runway Training (basic skills)
 - That Nail Place Ltd (hairdressing and beauty therapy)
 - Trainplus Ltd (health and social care).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p>	<p>429 part-time learners</p> <p>581 part-time learners 3,397 full-time learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)</p>	<p>1,189 full-time learners 3,373 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>2,907 learners 960 apprentices</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	
Health and social care	3
Engineering	3
Construction	2
Visual and performing arts	3
Foundations for life and work	3

Overall effectiveness

4. K College is a satisfactory college. The college was recently formed by the merger of two colleges and the senior managers and governors have sensibly chosen to invest in new accommodation and learning resources for learners. The achievements of learners in 2010/11 were broadly satisfactory, both on programmes at the college and those in the workplace. Learners make best progress in practical lessons and gain useful vocational and employment skills. However, too few learners complete their courses and managers and teachers are working hard to improve the proportion of learners completing their programmes. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but the quality of teaching varies considerably across the college. Learners feel safe on the college sites and adopt safe working practices.
5. The college provides a wide range of courses on five campuses across west and south Kent. Progression routes from foundation to advanced levels are clear in

many curriculum areas and a good proportion of the learners who complete their qualifications go on to employment or further study. The college has developed strong links with relevant partners that bring substantial benefits to learners. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the new structure gives managers more responsibility for raising learners' achievements. Safeguarding of learners and staff is good and security on all campuses has been improved. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, most teachers do not plan for the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons. Too few learners are recruited from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of women on apprenticeships is also too low. Quality assurance and self-assessment are satisfactory and recently improved. The college self-assessment report and quality improvement plans are evaluative and largely accurate. Financial planning and the management of risks are good. The college represents satisfactory value for money.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall and good for pupils aged 14 to 16 and learners on Train to Gain provision. The proportion of learners successfully completing their qualifications in 2010/11 was broadly in line with recent national averages. Learners' achievements vary significantly across the range of the college's provision. Where learners stay on to the end of their courses they generally pass, but learners' retention rates are not high enough.
- The standard of learners' practical work is good; this equips learners well for progression to employment or further study. The college places great emphasis on developing learners' employability skills, but too few gain functional skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy.
- Learners feel safe on the college campuses and comment on the harmonious atmosphere of mutual respect. Inspectors observed safe working practices in workshops and training.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A minority of lessons are outstanding, but too many are satisfactory. The best teaching is well planned and teachers develop lessons in which students gain in confidence and good employability skills. However, too often teachers are unclear about what the students will learn, and do not plan well enough for learners' differing needs. Tasks and activities are too easy and students lose interest and make slow progress.
- The college has taken effective steps to harmonise and rationalise the curriculum across the college since merger, ensuring appropriate breadth, depth and progression routes for learners. Managers have researched thoroughly employment needs in the communities local to the college and have made excellent use of other socio-economic data to inform the strategic development of the curriculum.
- The college has strong links with an extensive range of relevant partners. These partnerships bring substantial benefits to learners, such as enabling them to put into practice what they have learned in their programmes. Partnerships with outside agencies are particularly effective in supporting learners, as

demonstrated by the range of partners contributing to a well-designed tutorial programme.

- A well-conceived strategy, with individual learning plans at the centre, enables a comprehensive range of support resources to be targeted to those learners most in need. These include pastoral support and careers education, information advice and guidance. However, as a result of careful and regular monitoring of learning plans, the college has recognised inconsistencies in their quality and use.
- The governing body and senior leaders have established a new vision and set of values for the college which have provided staff with a clear purpose and strong direction to improve the quality of provision for all learners. The new management structure has resulted in all managers having greater responsibility and accountability for learners' outcomes. Senior managers have successfully coached and mentored middle managers, leading to improvements in curriculum management and in-year retention.
- The safeguarding team ensures that the safeguarding of learners is a high priority throughout the college. The college implements its comprehensive safeguarding policy and procedures well and learners feel safe as a result. Almost all staff have completed safeguarding training beyond the basic level.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college reviews the achievement of learners in different groups. The promotion of equality and diversity is good in some curriculum areas, but most teachers do not plan for the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons. The recruitment of minority ethnic learners is low compared to the profile of the regional population, and there are too few female learners on apprenticeships.
- The college ensures that managers regularly review their progress against action plans following self-assessment, and identify learners at risk more promptly. Judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate. The college makes very good use of its risk register to monitor progress against key risks. The college has improved the accuracy of its data.
- Value for money is satisfactory. The financial health of the college is satisfactory. Overall financial planning is good and control arrangements are satisfactory with good risk management. Accommodation is generally good, with an impressive new building in Tonbridge. Overall resources are satisfactory.

What does K College need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the recently developed quality improvement processes so that more students complete their courses, and teachers raise outcomes for learners throughout the college.
- Raise the standard of weaker teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers plan lessons that focus clearly on what students will learn, and provide interesting tasks and activities so that students make sustained progress.

- Develop greater consistency in the precision of target setting and in the rigour with which staff monitor individual learning plans, so that learners improve their performance.
- Ensure that equality and diversity form an integral aspect of lesson planning and progress reviews, so that learners are well prepared to live in a diverse society.
- Ensure that the college recruits more women onto apprenticeships, and more minority ethnic learners across the college, to reflect better the regional population.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the specialist knowledge of teachers and the way they treat learners with respect
- the very effective support and guidance for dealing with personal issues
- the help and guidance in lessons and the way teachers provide electronic information to help learners work on their own and catch up
- the understanding, flexibility and additional help of teachers towards those learners whose circumstances mean they have to balance college and paid work
- the absence of name calling or aggression at college
- the ready access to good information and communication technology (ICT)
- the reasonably priced food and a good range of healthy eating options.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the amount of help to improve numeracy skills, especially in lessons
- the amount of challenging and stretching work offered in lessons
- the way that changes are communicated.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the quality of support provided for their employees
- the professional and consultative approach of the college to meeting training needs
- the high standards of learners' work
- good communication with the college
- improvements to customer service
- excellent working relationships with individual tutors and assessors.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the consistency of the quality of communication with the college, across the range of the college's subject areas

- their involvement in reviewing learners' progress in their qualifications
- the tightness of the links between on- and off-the-job training
- the amount of paperwork, avoiding any that is unnecessary.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. The college has satisfactory capacity to improve. At their last inspections, the overall effectiveness of West Kent College was judged to be good, while that of South Kent College was judged to be inadequate. Since the merger, a new senior leadership team has been appointed. The college has established its strategic priorities and implemented new policies and procedures that draw on the best practice of both colleges. Curriculum management has been restructured to ensure greater responsibility and accountability for learners' outcomes. The re-inspection monitoring visit to the new K College in 2010 noted reasonable progress in six out of the seven themes.
7. The college has successfully implemented quality improvement and self-assessment strategies which ensure that managers monitor progress closely and take prompt action where necessary. Self-assessment is much improved and the self-assessment report is accurate. At senior level, the college makes very good use of its risk register to drive improvement and manage change. Actions to improve success rates concentrate firmly on improving the quality of teaching and learning, managing under performance and improving the use of management information. Management information now accurately reflects learners' programmes, progress and outcomes. The college has trained its middle managers to analyse and interpret data. As a result, overall success rates for 2010/11 have improved slightly on those of 2009/10, and in-year retention and attendance have improved across the college. The college acknowledges that it now needs to improve the consistency of curriculum management across all course teams.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

8. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of learners successfully achieving their qualifications in 2010/11 matched recent national averages for similar colleges. Outcomes for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses at foundation and intermediate level were satisfactory. However, outcomes for those on advanced courses were below national averages. Outcomes in 2010/11 for adult learners on long courses at intermediate and advanced level were around national averages, while those for foundation level courses were below national averages. Pass rates on long courses were broadly at or above national averages and were good in construction and information and communication technology (ICT) programmes. The college self-assessment report recognises that learners' achievements vary significantly across the range of the college's provision. Where learners complete their programmes they generally pass the qualification. Learners' retention remains a key challenge to the college.

9. Outcomes for school pupils aged 14 to 16 in 2010/11 on part-time vocational courses were good and many progressed onto full-time study at the college. In addition, the proportion of Train to Gain learners completing their qualifications by the agreed date was high in 2010/11. Outcomes for advanced apprentices were also high, but outcomes for apprentices were below national averages. Learners who receive additional learning support achieve slightly better success in gaining their qualifications than their peers. In addition, learners from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve success rates which match or exceed the college average.
10. The standards achieved by learners in practical activities are good. Learners enjoy their studies and successfully develop skills that equip them well for progression to employment or further study. Managers and teachers place great emphasis on developing learners' employability skills, but too few gain functional skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Learners feel safe on the college campuses and comment on the atmosphere of tolerance and respect. Inspectors observed safe working practices in workshops, lessons and workplaces.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. As recognised by the college's self-assessment report for 2010/11, the quality of students' learning varies too much across the different campuses and within, and between, curriculum areas. The quality of lessons ranges from highly effective and stimulating learning experiences to dull and poorly planned lessons with activities that do not capture students' interest well enough.
12. A minority of lessons are inspirational, typified by enthusiastic and well-prepared teachers who plan learning activities very well. These teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods and have high expectations of their students. As a result, students make rapid progress and develop a good range of employability skills. However, equality and diversity are not well promoted within lessons across the whole college. Not all teachers are confident enough yet to take full advantage of opportunities to promote discussion on equality and diversity themes.
13. Teaching is satisfactory in many lessons. Teachers do not always plan learning to take account of the range of students' interests and abilities, and lessons become pedestrian and dull. Although many teachers have detailed and informative records of their students' prior skills, knowledge and aptitude, they sometimes set tasks and activities that are too easy and students lose interest. A minority of teachers spend too long talking, ask closed questions and fail to check that students have fully understood how the tasks they are carrying out relate to their learning.
14. Resources, including ICT, are of high quality. However, the way teachers use these to give lessons energy and pace still varies too much across provision.

Students value the way some teachers have developed interesting learning materials that they can locate readily via the college's virtual learning environment (VLE). Assessment is satisfactory and most teachers provide regular and helpful written feedback. For some apprentices, this is not the case and feedback from assessors is insufficiently detailed to enable learners to know how improve their work.

15. Lesson observations have clearly identified where practice is poor. Managers have strengthened the arrangements for observing teaching and learning, and rigorous moderation is helping to ensure that the grading of observations is consistent. Managers recognise that the quality of lessons is not yet good enough and are striving to gain consistency across curriculum areas. Appropriate training is in place and staff have a range of support including mentoring and shadowing opportunities.
16. The extent to which course provision meets the needs of users is satisfactory and improving. The college has taken effective steps to harmonise the curriculum across the college since merger, ensuring appropriate breadth, depth and progression routes for learners. Learners' progression to further study at the college is good. Other developments to the curriculum have contributed to an increase in the proportion of learners remaining on their programmes compared to the same time in the previous year. The college has researched thoroughly employment needs in local communities and has made excellent use of other socio-economic data to inform the development of the curriculum in the longer term. These plans to meet learners' and employers' needs better are well conceived, and tackle identified skills gaps. Provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 meets their needs well, as shown by their high pass rates and their good progression into further study at the college.
17. The college places a high priority on developing learners' employability skills through work experience, paid full- or part-time work, or volunteering. Learners gain valuable accreditation for work skills development, but not enough are successful in functional skills in English and mathematics.
18. The college has strong links with an extensive range of relevant partners which bring substantial benefits to learners. Links with schools in vocational areas, such as hospitality and catering, help to provide an extensive range of courses for school pupils aged 14 to 16. Close links with local universities provide progression opportunities into higher education. Links with Kent Police led to learners in performing arts courses producing a series of video clips for an e-learning package designed to update police officers on changes to the Equalities Act. Learners commented very favourably on how this project has helped them to put into practice what they have learned on their courses and to see their relevance in the wider world. The college makes particularly good use of its partnerships with outside agencies to support learners, as demonstrated by the range of partners contributing to a well-designed tutorial programme.

19. Learners' and teachers' renewed concentration on sensible, relevant targets in individual learning plans is contributing to improved outcomes for learners. The college targets a comprehensive range of support resources at those learners most in need. This includes pastoral support, careers education and information, advice and guidance. However, pastoral staff recognise that there are inconsistencies in the precision of target setting and in the monitoring of learners' performance. Learners benefit from good additional learning support. Outcomes for learners in receipt of learning support are better than those of their peers. The college monitors carefully the impact of all support interventions, but recognises that more analysis of achievements relating to learners receiving additional learning support is needed.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

20. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the merger, the governing body and senior leaders established a new vision and set of values for the college, underpinned by strategic priorities. These provide staff at all levels with a clear purpose and strong direction to improve the quality of provision for all learners. Harmonisation of the previous two colleges' policies and procedures has been successful, drawing on the best practice of both institutions to create the new college. Senior leaders communicate the college's future direction effectively, visiting all sites regularly to support this. As a result of the successful estates strategy, a beautiful building has been completed in Tonbridge, and high-quality refurbishment in Folkestone and Dover has been completed. The new management structure has resulted in all managers having greater responsibility and accountability for learners' outcomes. Training for managers now focuses on improving the quality of teaching and learning, managing staff performance, target setting and the use of data to raise learners' achievements. Senior managers have successfully coached and mentored middle managers, leading to improvements in curriculum management and outcomes for learners.
21. The college benefits from good governance. Governors successfully use their extensive knowledge of further and higher education and business to influence the strategic direction of the college. They also provide good support and strong critical challenge to the senior leadership team. Governors work very well with managers to evaluate the performance of the college, demonstrating good understanding of the college's priorities and challenges. Committee work is of a high quality, linked closely to the main performance indicators of the strategic plan. Some governors have taken on champion roles to share their expertise with college managers in safeguarding, equality and diversity and health and safety.
22. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. A designated member of staff, supported by six officers and a member of the leadership team, ensures that safeguarding is a high priority. The college implements its comprehensive safeguarding policy and procedures well. As a result of feedback from learners in 2009/10, the college improved security at all sites. As a result, learners feel

safe at college. All staff and governors have completed basic level safeguarding training and almost all have now completed safeguarding training to a higher level, demonstrating good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff who work with learners aged 14 to 16 receive additional specialised training. Procedures are in place to protect learners from cyber-bullying, with regular monitoring of information sent to the college through social media channels. The college carries out appropriate checks, including of criminal records, for all staff, governors, volunteers and learners in relevant work placements. The college maintains a single central record of these checks. The college conducts risk assessments for all relevant activities, maintaining records of incidents, accidents and near misses. Health and safety procedures are effective.

23. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college meets its legal requirements regarding the equality duty. Governors, and more recently middle managers, review the achievement of learners by age, gender, disability and ethnicity. Analyses show that learners aged 16 to 18 from minority ethnic groups perform slightly better than other groups. Where learners make slow progress, managers now intervene more quickly. Promotional materials are clear and the much-used web-based prospectus reflects the diversity of Kent. However, the recruitment of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds across the college, and of female learners on apprenticeships, is low. The proportion of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to that among the learners, but lower than that in the regional population. The college continues to work with a national organisation to promote careers in teaching to those of minority ethnic heritage. Almost all staff have completed training in equality and diversity. The promotion of equality and diversity is good in creative arts and in health and care. However, most teachers do not plan for the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons.
24. Arrangements for collecting the views of learners, employers and other stakeholders are satisfactory. Most learners participate in surveys, the results of which show high levels of satisfaction. However, some learners do not always receive feedback on the outcomes of surveys. The college makes good use of youth workers to promote effective contributions by learners through the student union, and to train the 25 elected representatives in action planning for improvement. The college makes regular use of social media and the student forum to seek and record views.
25. Self-assessment and quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. The college has ensured that managers regularly review progress against action plans following self-assessment, and identify more promptly learners at risk. Course teams meet regularly and all staff contribute to the self-assessment and quality improvement process. Judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate and mostly evaluative. The college makes very good use of its risk register to monitor progress against key risks. Many of the actions to improve outcomes for learners are starting to take effect. Judgements derived from the observation of teaching and learning are accurate and identify clearly strengths

and areas for improvement. Managers have strengthened performance management to support poorly performing staff.

26. Value for money is satisfactory as learners' outcomes are no better than satisfactory. The financial health of the college is satisfactory. Financial planning is good as is risk management. The college demonstrates its strong commitment to equipping learners with the skills and knowledge needed for a successful working life by re-investing its capital in resources for learners. The college has prioritised investment in ICT across all sites for teaching and management information.

Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 3

Context

27. Full- and part-time courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels are offered in health and social care, and early years for students aged 16 to 18 and adults. In addition, a range of short vocational courses are offered for adults. Of the 424 full-time learners, 333 are aged 16 to 18. The majority of the part-time learners are adults taking health and social care, dental nursing and child development programmes. Around 340 are on Train to Gain programmes and 138 are apprentices.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of learners successfully achieving their qualifications at foundation and intermediate levels is satisfactory and has improved. However, learners' success on advanced courses remains below recent national averages. Outcomes for part-time learners on Train to Gain programmes in 2010/11 improved and were above national averages. Outcomes for apprentices were satisfactory; however, those for advanced apprentices were below national averages.
- Most learners enjoy their studies and make satisfactory progress towards achieving their care or early years qualifications. The standard of learners' work on college-based courses is good. Many learners successfully progress to further study or into higher education and employment. On apprenticeship programmes, standards of learners' work and progress are good in dental nursing and satisfactory in child development.
- Learners feel safe at college and in the workplace and adopt safe working practices.
- Teachers are highly effective in developing learners' understanding of safeguarding through relevant and interesting activities. For example, case studies on a range of ethical dilemmas such as assisted suicide, non acceptance of medical interventions because of religious beliefs and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults generated lively and productive debates.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons have a clear focus on learning outcomes for individuals. Learners set and review their own short-term targets successfully and make good progress. Teachers monitor learners' understanding and check their learning. However, they do not always make activities relevant enough to learners' main programmes of study and, as a result, some learners lose interest and do not see the links to their main programmes of study.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not provide enough challenge and extension for the more able learners and this limits their progress. Classes are

well equipped and specialist resources are good. However, the use of ICT in lessons to promote independent learning and reflective practice is limited.

- On full-time courses, teachers provide regular and consistent assessment with constructive written feedback, which supports the learners to improve. Assessors on Train to Gain programmes provide learners with good assessments which are marked and returned promptly. Feedback for apprentices on health and social care and childcare apprenticeships is too brief and, on occasions, does not indicate how learners can further improve their learning.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessments inform the learning plans of apprenticeships, accurately identifying additional training needs. Tutors effectively review learners' progress and provide pastoral support. Teachers use learners' individual learning plans to record progress, set targets and monitor attendance. However, some learners' targets are not specific enough and targets are inconsistently monitored and followed up.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers now monitor and review the provision closely and this is starting to have an impact. More learners are completing their courses. Subject teams use data effectively to evaluate performance, plan for improvements and develop the curriculum. For example, work-based learning managers bring relevant staff together to set targets which raise expectations and promote success.
- Staff morale is good and curriculum teams have a strong focus on improving the quality of provision and outcomes for all. Advanced practitioners and whole team professional development are beginning to improve the provision.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well through the curriculum. Teachers develop learners' understanding well using relevant learning activities and materials. Safeguarding of learners is good and prioritised across all aspects of the provision. The self-assessment process involves all staff and the resulting report is accurate and identifies the key areas for improvement.

What does K College need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for learners, especially advanced apprentices, by ensuring that teaching, training and learning focus on activities to develop independent learning and reflective practice.
- Improve the quality of satisfactory teaching and learning by making sure that all learning activities are relevant to learners' programmes of study and provide sufficient challenge to more able learners.
- Ensure that assessments and feedback for apprentices are regular and rigorous and targets for all learners are relevant and measurable.

Engineering

Grade 3

Context

28. Currently 398 full-time and 169 part-time learners take courses in engineering. Of these, 118 are apprentices and the remainder are full-time learners. Courses cover engineering, motor vehicle maintenance and vehicle technology at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Nearly 200 learners are aged 16 to 18, around 100 are adult learners and over 50 are pupils aged 14 to 16 from local secondary schools who attend the college part time.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. In 2010/11 outcomes for learners on full-time foundation and advanced courses and advanced apprenticeships were satisfactory. However, too many learners failed to achieve their qualifications on full-time intermediate courses and apprenticeships. At the time of inspection there were clear signs of improvement in the standard of learners' work and progress.
- Full-time learners produce work of a good standard and are developing good practical skills and theoretical knowledge. In addition, standards of work for apprentices are good. They benefit from regular visits by assessors and college pastoral staff who help them to make good progress. Learners enjoy their studies and progression to further study, higher education and employment is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers use a variety of activities and strategies to make learning interesting. However, some theory teaching is uninspiring and the learners make slow progress. In addition, teachers do not always plan differentiated activities to meet the needs and abilities of all learners. Resources on all sites are satisfactory with a suitable range of vehicles and specialist and diagnostic equipment.
- Assessment of learners' practical and written work is good and teachers provide prompt, detailed written and oral feedback. Assessors conduct thorough assessments of apprentices in the workplace at regular intervals, and provide employers and learners with good feedback following each assessment visit.
- Managers have recently reviewed and changed the curriculum to improve progression routes for learners. They have created productive links between the college, local employers and manufacturers, which have resulted in more resources such as vehicles, components and diagnostic equipment.
- Guidance and support for learners are good. Staff have improved recruitment and selection for full-time courses and apprenticeships, ensuring that learners are on the correct course with appropriate levels of support. Learning support assistants provide good support for learners with learning or other support needs. In engineering, the assistants are given a useful induction to help them understand the course context and the equipment learners use.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and good in work-based learning. Managers are beginning to use management information and data to bring about improvements. They pay close attention to poorly performing courses and set demanding targets for all aspects of provision. Managers now set high standards for curriculum teams and constantly strive for improvement.
- Learners feel safe in the workshops and in the workplace. The promotion of safeguarding is satisfactory. It is given a high priority with no tolerance of unacceptable language, harassment or behaviour. The promotion of equality and diversity is also satisfactory; it is not always reinforced in lessons or work-based learning reviews.
- Teachers are well qualified and have considerable industrial experience. Some teachers still participate in motor vehicle and motor sport activities which enhance their knowledge and inspire learners.
- The self-assessment report is evaluative, largely accurate and identifies the key strengths and areas for improvement. Quality improvement plans are realistic and tackle the main weaknesses.

What does K College need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for learners by ensuring that all teachers plan interesting and relevant lessons and check learners' progress rigorously.
- Ensure that all teachers plan differentiated lesson activities to meet the needs and abilities of all learners.
- In order to prepare learners for life in our diverse society, ensure that teachers consistently promote equality and diversity in lessons and work-based learning reviews.

Construction

Grade 2

Context

29. Construction courses are provided from entry level to higher education in trowel and wood trades, plumbing, painting and decorating, electrical installation technology, multi-crafts and construction management. There are 1,012 college-based learners, around 60% of whom are on full-time courses. Of the 278 work-based learners, 147 are intermediate apprentices, 40 are advanced apprentices and 91 are on other programmes. Around 50 school pupils aged 14 to 16 take part-time construction courses.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of learners successfully achieving their qualifications on intermediate and advanced courses in 2010/11 was high and, at foundation level, at recent national averages. Outcomes for advanced electrical apprentices were good, while those for construction apprentices were satisfactory. In addition, outcomes for school pupils were good.
- Learners develop good practical skills. They gain confidence from the guidance and encouragement of their teachers. First-year learners show high standards in plastering, whilst learners in brickwork produce impressive segmental arches and decorative panels. Learners' written work is generally satisfactory, but occasionally poorly presented. Apprentices produce work of a good standard in the workplace and well-illustrated portfolios.
- Learners feel safe on the college campuses. They work safely and wear appropriate protective clothing in workshops. Learners have good site discipline and awareness of the safety of their peers.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best learning takes place in practical lessons where teachers set learners challenging tasks and have high expectations of them. Learners quickly develop good working practices and know the value of the skills they develop. In the best lessons, teachers link topics effectively to solving common practical problems and industry practice.
- In theory lessons, the learning activities are interesting but not always tailored to individual needs. Occasionally, teachers do not manage activities well or provide insufficient work for those who finish quickly. They make too little use of direct questioning to encourage participation and confirm individual learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Assessment of learners' work is satisfactory but sometimes lacks detailed and constructive written feedback. Teachers do not always encourage learners to assess the quality of their own work before being assessed. In the workplace, assessors make insufficient use of direct observation to assess learners' skills and competence. Employers do not always receive information on learners' progress so that remedial action can be taken.

- The range of construction provision is good and reflects the diverse needs of the wide geographical area served by the college. Learners' progression rates are high between curriculum levels and into employment. College-based learners benefit from a personal development award to improve their preparation for employment.
- Not all full-time learners take part in organised work experience opportunities. However, many participate in college and community projects and valuable links exist with suppliers, manufacturers, schools and the National Skills Academy.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Teachers and technical staff provide good individual support for learners. They assess learners' additional support needs well and outcomes for supported learners compare favourably with those of their peers. However, in their lesson planning, teachers do not always provide a sufficiently active role for learning support staff.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders provide good support for curriculum managers, enabling them to manage their sections effectively. They use data well to manage the provision, including the widespread work-based learning. Communication between team members is good and effective use is made both of video conferencing and regular face-to-face meetings.
- The self-assessment report is evaluative and accurate. It correctly identifies key strengths and areas for improvement. The quality improvement plan clearly sets out the areas in need of improvement but does not prioritise them. Some improvement actions lack detail and specific targets.
- Resources are satisfactory. Workshops are well equipped and teachers make good use of the electronic whiteboards in the classrooms. Materials are carefully used and re-used when possible. Learners benefit from the interesting and relevant learning materials on the virtual learning environment.

What does K College need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, training and learning through better management of learning activities, greater use of directed questioning to encourage contributions from all learners, and better use of learning support assistants in lessons.
- Improve assessment practice by encouraging learners to reflect more on the quality of their work, providing detailed and constructive written feedback on learners' work and the use of direct observation of learners' skills in the workplace.
- Improve learners' readiness for employment by further developing employment-related projects and work experience opportunities.

Visual and performing arts

Grade 3

Context

30. Currently 865 learners study art and design, media and performing arts. Over 600 are at Tonbridge, around 150 are at Ashford and 120 study in Folkestone. Nearly 30 learners take the foundation diploma in art and design and over 40 study GCE A level in media and film. Currently, around 40 learners take foundation courses, over 180 take intermediate level programmes and around 650 advanced programmes. The majority of students are under 19 and around two thirds are female.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. In 2010/11, the proportion of learners successfully achieving their qualifications was satisfactory on many courses. Outcomes were above national averages in the foundation diploma in art and design, A-level media and BTEC national diploma in music technology. However, outcomes were below national averages on AS provision and the intermediate level diploma for music practitioners.
- The proportion of learners completing their qualifications was high in the foundation diploma in art and design, A-level media and the BTEC national diploma in music technology. Completion rates on other courses are at, or below, national averages. Attendance is satisfactory.
- The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. In fine art, fashion and textiles, music, media and dance, students develop high levels of vocational skills and make significant progress in lessons. In dance, music and media studies, learners analyse their work with increasing accuracy and confidence. However, notebooks and sketchbooks in fine art and photography are often over reliant on copied images and written work lacks personal enquiry and evaluation.
- Many learners start visual and performing arts courses with low prior attainment and make good progress. Learners negotiate with their teachers and set relevant individual targets for their learning. Teachers track and monitor learners' targets well to help learners make progress. For example, some advanced dance learners were confident of their roles and targets in a highly successful technical rehearsal.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well and encourage learners to develop their own stylistic identity and constructively evaluate each other's work. Well-established routines and teachers' high expectations develop industry-standard practice and appropriate behaviour among learners. This helps learners develop self-esteem and self-confidence.
- However, in a minority of lessons, learners do not take enough responsibility for their own learning. Teachers do not always clearly share learning objectives and

outcomes with the learners and, in some cases, the planned learning outcomes are significantly over ambitious for the learners.

- Specialist resources are good and teachers use them well to support learners. For example, specialist facilities in the art studios allow learners to experience two- and three-dimensional work, printmaking, textiles, graphic design and photography. Learners make very effective use of high-quality information and learning technology in music and media, enabling them to become independent learners.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Staff conduct comprehensive initial assessments of learners' skills and potential, and more students are now completing their courses. Staff carefully monitor learners' progress and effective individual discussions promote learners' independence and employability skills. Learners set sensible targets in their learning plans which enable early intervention to support their progress where necessary.
- Safeguarding is satisfactory and students feel safe. An inclusive environment is created where every student and their views are valued. Health and safety practices are well promoted in dance, music and drama and staff and learners work safely in all areas.
- Leadership and management are good. Communications are good and are promoted effectively by regular team meetings by video links between campuses. All staff are involved in the annual reviews and the development of quality improvement plans. The self-assessment reports are accurate and appropriately self-critical, and focus on tackling the recognised underperformance of some courses.
- Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning focus on constructive advice and provide a dialogue for improvement. Teachers reflect critically on their own practice and collaborate well to raise learners' aspirations and attainment.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well across the visual and performing arts. They use activities, themes and visual stimuli from a wide range of cultural contexts to develop learners' awareness.

What does K College need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for learners by ensuring that teachers plan learning outcomes that are interesting, challenging, and at the right level for the learners.
- Improve outcomes for learners in fine art and photography by ensuring that their notebooks and sketchbooks contain more original work, and their written work includes more evidence of personal enquiry and evaluation.

Foundations for life and work

Grade 3

Context

31. Some 230 learners are enrolled within the supported learning department. Around 180 are aged 16 to 18 and 63 school pupils aged 14 to 16 attend part-time courses. Courses are offered between pre-entry level and foundation level. The college provides courses in functional literacy and numeracy as well as information and communication technology, independent living and work readiness. Courses run on all five of the main college sites across south and west Kent.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Foundation learners at entry level enjoy their studies and where they remain on their courses they complete them successfully. However, in recent years too many learners have left their courses before gaining a qualification.
- Standards in speaking and listening are good. When learners are required to make presentations to their peers they do so with fluency and enthusiasm. They take a full part in class discussions and are able to negotiate roles when working in a team. One group of learners with learning difficulties was able to decide how to allocate their duties as a car washing team and adapt to varying circumstances as the activity progressed.
- Attendance and retention rates have been low on some courses over the last two years. Punctuality for learners with learning difficulties is good, although learners on other courses sometimes struggle to arrive on time.
- Learners stated that they feel safe in and around the college and when travelling to the various sites. Learners adopt safe working practices when in workshops and when engaged on practical tasks. Learners are clear about how to register any concern they might have about their own safety and well-being.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but the quality varies across the campuses. Good lessons are characterised by a variety of practical activities to which learners are keen to contribute. They remain interested throughout these lessons and make sensible responses to teachers' questions. They are able to collaborate over tasks and complete work on time.
- In some lessons, however, not all teachers match the planned activities to the needs of individuals, so that some learners spend too much time inactive or watching others. Teachers do not always deploy learning support assistants effectively in class. However, where learning assistants understand the learning objectives for the sessions, and their work is well targeted, they make a valuable contribution to learners' success.
- Staff have recently introduced individual learning plans. These provide a comprehensive structure for skills development but are too long, which limits their usefulness to the learners. Initial assessments of learners' abilities are

sometimes too reliant on limited sources of information. Learners' targets are insufficiently specific and measurable to help learners improve or for their teachers to monitor progress.

- The range of provision for learners with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Teachers and managers have been successful in engaging with significant numbers of learners whose prior learning experiences have been disturbed and disrupted. Many learners on these courses progress onto vocational courses within the college.
- The college has good partnerships with a large number of special schools. Learners benefit from the smooth arrangements that help them make the transition from school to college. Effective links have been made with one particular special school which assist college staff in supporting learners with difficult and challenging behaviour.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory. The emphasis on quality improvement is well understood by all staff. Teams meet regularly and plan activities and courses well.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The facilities for learners with disabilities are good on most campuses. In one class considering seasonal festivals, the teacher related differences of ethnicity and religion to learners' own experiences and backgrounds in a sensitive manner. However, teachers do not all plan similar experiences sufficiently into schemes of work.
- Safeguarding of learners is satisfactory and appropriately prioritised across the provision.
- The self-assessment report is largely accurate and realistic about the strengths and areas for improvement it identifies. However, team reviews do not sufficiently involve all staff. The self-assessment report is supported by a quality improvement plan that provides a timely and clearly structured basis for current and future improvement.

What does K College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all lessons take full account of the range of learners' abilities and interests, in order to improve their achievements and participation.
- Ensure that learners play a full part in reviewing and recording their own progress, including target setting, so that they take more responsibility for their learning.
- Review and improve schemes of work and lesson plans to ensure that teachers promote all aspects of equality and diversity within the learning programmes.

Information about the inspection

32. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and nine additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy principal, 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 learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. 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)
K 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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	4,327		3,242		
Full-time learners	3,398	273	242	1,085	1,458
Part-time learners				1,425	
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3	2	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
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>	3				
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3				
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?	3				
Leadership and management	3				
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?	3				
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?	3				

*where applicable to the type of provision.

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