

Richmond upon Thames College

General further education college

Inspection dates		10-14 December 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- A significant number of students do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly on vocational courses. Some teachers do not expect enough of their students when challenging them to fulfil their potential.
- Too many students in some parts of the college do not achieve the qualifications they are studying.
- Too few students studying English and mathematics in addition to their main course of study achieve these qualifications. Too few obtain the high grades necessary at GCSE level to improve their prospects of employment or progression to higher education courses.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good enough and varies too much between, and within, curriculum areas.
- Curriculum management in some subject areas is not sufficiently effective in bringing about sustained improvements in teaching and learning and in students' outcomes.
- Managers do not use the feedback from students and other users to provide an accurate overview of what is good about the college and what requires improvement.

This provider has the following strengths:

- The college possesses an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in which students from a very diverse range of backgrounds behave very well and show high levels of respect for their peers and staff.
- Success rates on many vocational courses are high, having improved significantly in the last year.
- Staff and managers share a positive culture, with a strong commitment to improving students' experiences.
- Staff and managers receive highly effective training and support, which helps them to improve the performance of most curriculum areas.

- Students travel considerable distances to take advantage of the wide range of courses which the college offers. The curriculum is based on a well-considered analysis designed to meet local and regional employment needs and the requirements of higher education.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the success rates and grades for students studying additional English and mathematics qualifications by implementing fully the existing plan for this provision, and ensuring this leads to clear actions which have a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- Develop the ability of teachers, through existing initiatives, to improve assessment strategies in lessons and target setting, so they can gain a precise view of the progress that students make and help them to achieve higher grades for their coursework and in examinations.
- Make better use of the information gathered about students through initial assessment, to plan teaching strategies which meet their individual needs.
- Strengthen teaching and curriculum management by ensuring that the sharing of good practice takes place at all levels in the college; and that appraisal of staff performance is always closely linked to the quality of teaching and learning and improvements in success rates.
- Ensure that the good practice in collecting feedback from students and other users in some areas of the college is shared with all curriculum departments, so that the college can gain a more accurate and timely view overall of what they think about the provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After a three-year period in which overall success rates remained static and below the national average, they improved significantly in 2011/12 and are now satisfactory. This improvement in performance has been particularly noticeable for students aged 16 to 18. For the smaller cohort of adult students, success rates remain low. ▪ Vocational courses have contributed significantly to much of this improvement. Success rates for these courses in most subject areas have risen markedly to at least the national average and, in many cases, well above it. A small number of subject areas remains resistant to this trend of much improved performance and has low success rates. However, while the college is very successful in retaining students on vocational courses, it is less so in ensuring that these students achieve their qualification. Achievement rates are below the national average for students aged 16 to 18 and particularly low for adult students. ▪ Students on A-level courses are successful in completing their qualifications. In many subjects, it is a 100% pass rate. They are less so on AS levels where, although the success rate has improved in 2011/12, it remains too far below the national average. ▪ Most students who enrol at the college have performed satisfactorily on their GCSE courses or equivalent programmes. Only around a quarter of students have high prior attainment. Too many students do not make sufficient progress in their studies based on their predicted grades. Progress is particularly poor on some vocational courses and varies too much on AS- and A-level courses. ▪ The college has been successful to some extent in reducing gaps in achievement between different groups of students. Students with identified learning needs who have performed less well than their peers in previous years are now equally successful in achieving their qualifications. Some cohorts of students from minority ethnic groups achieve very well whilst 	

others are less successful. Male students perform less well than their female counterparts and significantly so on advanced level courses, although the gap has narrowed.

- The college is very welcoming to students from a diverse range of backgrounds. Students value the way in which this diversity helps them to understand people's differences. They are very aware of their rights and responsibilities. Students feel safe around the college and standards of behaviour are good. They are very respectful of both their teachers and peers. The college has stringent policies on punctuality and attendance has improved in the last year. It is now satisfactory.
- Students enjoy studying at the college and develop good technical skills and knowledge in many lessons. They take part in a wide range of charity and voluntary activities. The promotion of, and participation in, sporting activities is a particularly strong feature of the college's extra-curricular offer, while several thriving clubs and societies help students to improve their confidence and personal skills. Innovative work experience initiatives help students with moderate and severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities to develop their employability skills well.
- The development of students' skills in English and mathematics is satisfactory, but is too variable in different subject areas. Too few students are successful in achieving GCSE mathematics and English qualifications at grades A* to C. Functional skills success rates are generally satisfactory, but are low in English.
- Success rates for the small numbers of apprentices training in the workplace are low and have declined over the last four years. Too few apprentices complete their qualification in the timescale planned for them when they started the course. The small cohort of advanced apprentices achieves very successfully, whereas the larger group of intermediate apprentices performs poorly. The college has taken actions to close poorly performing areas of its apprenticeship provision.
- Progression to higher education courses for those students completing advanced level courses is good. Progression between levels of study is satisfactory overall. Too few students progress from AS level to the second year of A-level programmes. This is particularly the case in science and mathematics. Data on the destination of students outside the college who have not progressed to higher education are incomplete as the college has been unable to contact a significant proportion of the relevant leavers for feedback.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected in students' broadly average achievement and progress. Teachers are enthusiastic and support students well during and outside of lessons. The college's attempts over the last year to ensure that teachers have appropriate expectations of students are evident in many classes, but weaker lessons often feature insufficiently challenging learning activities.
- Better lessons include interesting, varied and relevant tasks which focus sharply on what students should be learning and which enable them to make expected or better progress. However, even in many of these lessons, teachers make insufficient use of detailed student profiles to plan the learning in such a way as to meet the often wide range of students' prior attainment. Too frequently, all students complete the same tasks irrespective of their ability, and higher performing students do not always have opportunities for additional challenge to accelerate their learning and progress.
- Teachers do not use assessment sufficiently well to enable them to have a precise and reliable view of the learning and progress of all students. They rely too much on verbal questioning to check and extend students' learning. Teachers use questioning to ensure all students contribute during lessons, but are often too ready to summarise students' answers themselves. They miss opportunities to ask students to justify their answers and to challenge their thinking.
- Questioning is at its most effective when teachers support individual students or groups well during their independent working on tasks, causing them to reflect on, and evaluate, their work.

Where it is less effective, teachers allow insufficient time for thorough checking of understanding and move onto the next task before consolidating students' learning.

- In the weaker lessons, teachers' planning focuses on the completion of tasks to the detriment of the skills and knowledge students should be developing. Teachers talk too much in a significant proportion of lessons and therefore do not provide sufficient opportunities to assess or support students' learning and progress. Students have little opportunity for active participation in the lessons or to learn independently of teachers.
- Some teachers and students use information and learning technology (ILT) very successfully to enhance learning. However, the use of ILT is under developed across the full range of the college's provision. In too many lessons, teachers use ILT solely for the purpose of showing pre-prepared presentations.
- The college has improved the quality of teachers' written and verbal feedback. This is particularly apparent on vocational courses at advanced level and the college has also ensured students receive their marked work back more quickly. Advice for students to improve their work on these courses is constructive. The best examples reveal students setting their own targets to improve which they then agree with the teacher. However, some of this target-setting is not always sufficiently precise.
- The college's well-planned new tutorial arrangements to monitor students' progress effectively show students how well they are progressing. However, not all target setting is yet of a consistently high standard to ensure precise assessments of students' progress. The extent to which staff have implemented these new arrangements successfully varies within subject areas.
- A growing number of teachers use good strategies to develop students' skills in English and mathematics. They pay particularly good attention to ensuring that students acquire and use technical language appropriately. However, the focus on this area of students' learning is too variable across the college and spelling and grammar often go uncorrected in students' work.
- Support for students is effective in helping them to achieve in some areas of the college and follows on promptly from rigorous initial assessment of their additional learning needs. New arrangements for information, advice and guidance and for personal tutoring are well conceived and are enabling more teachers to focus solely on students' learning and progress. Communication between colleagues responsible for teaching and for tutorials is good and enables early intervention for students at risk of not completing their studies.
- New arrangements to evaluate and improve teachers' professional practice are showing significant benefits for students in many, but not all, curriculum areas. Teachers appreciate the greater clarity of the lesson observation process and the role of the teaching and learning advocates in helping them to improve their skills.
- The college has planned for and introduced new arrangements for lesson observations and acknowledges that inconsistencies remain in the precise impact of teaching on students' learning and progress. Inspectors' judgements of teaching and learning during the inspection showed too much divergence from the assessments made by college observers.
- Students work well together and learn in a harmonious atmosphere of mutual respect. The promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom is too variable across the college as a whole. Some teachers plan their lessons well to promote and reinforce equality and diversity, but others miss opportunities to encourage students' better understanding of these aspects of their learning.

Science and mathematics**Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement in science and mathematics. Outcomes have improved on most courses in mathematics and are at, or above, national averages. However, success rates are low in most science subjects and remain below national averages despite some modest overall improvement in 2011/12.
- Staff have high expectations of their students and are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject. They are very supportive and encouraging in helping students to develop their knowledge and skills. Students appreciate this support, including the well-attended drop-in workshops to which they self-refer.
- In the best lessons, teachers set tasks for students based on their individual ability. In one mathematics class, this was done using colour-coded question sheets. However, lesson plans frequently lack sufficient detail in defining clear objectives and strategies to meet individual needs rather than those of the group as a whole. In many classes, students are unable to lead discussions or contribute actively as teachers talk too much.
- The checking of students' progress in lessons is sometimes good, with effective use of question-and-answer activities to probe understanding. However, this practice is not consistently used in all subject areas, and in some lessons where it is used it does not involve all students. Checks on learning in these lessons are limited and students' progress suffers from a lack of challenge to the more able members of the group.
- The development of students' laboratory skills is effective. Students demonstrate the ability to handle glassware and chemical solutions safely and confidently. They have a good awareness of health and safety through teachers reminding them of the need to review safety measures at appropriate points in practical lessons, and to develop their own safe working protocols in project work.
- Laboratory resources are satisfactory. Some laboratories with old décor and ageing equipment do not provide a particularly stimulating learning environment.
- Most teachers assess students' assignment work promptly. The quality of feedback is often good in science and incorporates helpful points for improvement. In mathematics, the marking of some work is very thorough and students have to retake assessments following additional support until they have demonstrated a sufficient knowledge of the topic. However, some feedback on assessed work is very brief and does not help students to know what they have to do to improve their work.
- Students value the electronic learning resources available, and, in some subjects, teachers make good use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) to set assignments and homework. However, others miss opportunities to use ILT to enhance learning in lessons.
- Students receive a lot of encouragement to progress to higher education and a significant number obtain places at university. The range of subjects in both the sciences and mathematics is broad and popular with students, many of whom travel a long way to attend courses at the college in this department.
- Teachers do not always identify appropriate opportunities for students to develop their English skills in lessons. Students' presentation and scientific drawing skills are often under developed. Students on advanced level science courses are sometimes hesitant in using specialist terminology and are not challenged sufficiently well to do so. In mathematics, some students set out their work in a disorganised way which increases the chances of transpositional and other errors.
- Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Students receive good advice from admissions tutors who work with subject specialists in helping A-level students to select the right

combinations of courses. However, students taking AS-level biology without studying AS-level chemistry tend to perform less well than those students taking both subjects.

- The college has been successful in reducing the differences in the achievements of men and women in these subject areas, although the latter continue to perform better than the former. Students and staff work in an inclusive working environment, but opportunities are missed in lessons to challenge stereotypical thinking and to engage students in naturally occurring discussions about equality and diversity.

<p>Sport</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment in sport are good. Outcomes for students have shown a very significant improvement in the last year, particularly on vocational courses where success rates are now high. Performance has been less successful on the smaller number of academic programmes. Students generally make good progress in lessons. They develop increased knowledge in theory lessons, for example of pulmonary functions, and good practical skills through activities such as fitness tests and health screenings.
- Staff are well qualified in both teaching and sport. Many have significant subject expertise and experience in particular disciplines. All teachers have coaching responsibilities in the college’s sports academies in addition to their teaching function, and act as role models to the students who benefit in developing professional and disciplined attitudes to work and sport.
- Teachers work in small, close-knit teams with full accountability for their assigned courses and targets for achievement. They plan very effectively to meet students’ individual learning needs through detailed schemes of work and lesson plans designed to build knowledge and skills. The wide range of planned activities in lessons reflects students’ prior attainment accurately. Teachers make very good use of revision sessions and practical assignments to help students achieve their qualifications.
- Access to very good sports facilities enhances students’ development of practical skills in sports such as football and volleyball. A newly equipped gymnasium enables students to apply learning from theory classes, such as the exploration of the use of muscles on different pieces of exercise equipment. Students benefit also from the use of local leisure centres to practise indoor cycling and to carry out fitness assessments for schoolchildren.
- Monitoring of students’ progress in lessons is good. Teachers use direct questioning well to elicit full explanations from students. Very effective warm-up and plenary activities at the start and end of lessons, as well as quizzes and worksheets, provide accurate on-going assessments of students’ progress. Observations of practical skills in lessons, such as football dribbling, result in immediate feedback for students, with good use of peer assessment to check learning. Workbooks support learning well through accurate clarification of course expectations and assessment criteria. Teachers return marked assignments promptly and while the feedback is supportive, it does not always explain fully what students need to do to improve their work.
- Many lessons incorporate very good planning for the differing abilities of the students present, and result in the completion of objectives which all students find appropriately challenging. In one class, students organising a sports event had individual responsibility for different aspects of managing the activities according to their ability and interests. However, teachers talk too much in some classes and this inhibits students’ independent learning and their opportunity to practise research skills.
- Personal tutors work well with students and teachers to review and update students’ targets. They attend course team meetings and keep themselves informed fully of students’ progress

and performance. They monitor aspects such as attendance effectively and take rapid action to resolve any problems.

- Teachers provide good opportunities for students to develop their English skills well in lessons. Students use complex anatomical terms well and learn to spell the names of particular muscles in the body accurately. However, the support for some students with English as their second language is not sufficiently well integrated with classroom activities.
- Information, advice and guidance are very good. Students are clear about their ambitions and progression routes at an early stage of their studies and praise the guidance they receive from staff about suitable pathways to meet their career aims. Well-planned progression routes offer students a variety of choices from foundation level through to university entrance or employment. Students study for very useful and relevant additional qualifications specific to particular careers, such as personal training.
- The sports department promotes an inclusive culture where students respect each other and staff. Some lessons promote equality and diversity well, for example in exploring the barriers to women participating in sport but, in others, teachers miss opportunities to integrate an understanding of equality in sport into their lesson plans.

Visual arts	
Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect the good outcomes for students in visual arts. Many students make good, or very good, progress in their studies, particularly on academic courses. Success rates on vocational programmes have improved considerably in the last year to be well above national averages. Students enjoy their courses and value the support they receive from teachers. Progression within the subject area to other courses and to higher education is good.
- Teachers have ambitious expectations for the students. They design projects which encourage students to think creatively, make good progress and value their work. Students produce many original and creative pieces of work and develop a very good range of technical and more general skills.
- Many of the visual arts staff are practising professionals who use their skills and knowledge to very good effect in planning, designing and teaching lessons. They produce creative and imaginative learning resources and apply industry standards when judging students' work.
- Students produce their own very useful self-assessment profiles. They are familiar with their grades for assessed work and the future targets set for them. Teachers know their students well and use this knowledge very productively to plan lessons which stimulate their interest. Lesson plans and schemes of work are detailed and require students to learn new skills and techniques. Teachers encourage students very effectively to develop the skill of independent working both in and outside of the classroom. They ensure that students take responsibility for the planning of their projects and how they will complete them in lessons and during home study. Students work very well on their own or in small groups in most lessons with teachers prompting them appropriately regarding deadlines, research techniques and learning objectives. In a small minority of lessons, teachers spend too much time talking to students as a group which limits their opportunities to develop independent thinking skills.
- Peer mentoring and an atmosphere of constructive criticism ensure students support each other well and develop self-confidence in their work. They often exceed the requirements of project briefs through imaginative and innovative ideas gleaned from additional research. Teachers provide helpful pressure and encouragement to ensure that students with a wide range of abilities complete their studies and achieve well.

- Students benefit from good curriculum enrichment through productive partnerships with art colleges and museums. A visit to a zoo to sketch animals resulted in the students learning advanced computing skills in animation at college and gaining a much greater appreciation of animals and their habitats. Study trips abroad inspire students and extend their experience. Some students become involved in valuable charity and community work.
- In a number of lessons, teachers miss opportunities to promote equality and diversity. Less able students and those with particular disabilities or other special requirements benefit from being able to attend support workshops and additional studio time. Students feel safe and work in an atmosphere of mutual respect for both their peers and teachers.
- Some classrooms are too crowded and become cluttered. The college recognises the need to provide more storage space for artwork. Staff deal quickly and efficiently with any health and safety issues and they all receive appropriate risk assessment training.

Social sciences and psychology

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement in social sciences and psychology. Students' outcomes are satisfactory overall but vary considerably between different subjects and types of qualifications. Most students complete their courses, but too few achieve high grades as a result of insufficient challenge in many lessons. Students make reasonable progress in developing their critical and analytical abilities as well as their personal, social and employability skills.
- In the better lessons, teachers use their detailed knowledge of students to plan ambitious targets for them to achieve. These classes provide appropriate levels of challenge for the more able students and good support for those performing less well. However, many teachers use general aims and objectives without considering students' individual starting points sufficiently well. These lessons are less effective in encouraging all students to achieve their full potential.
- Most teachers have good classroom management skills to which students respond positively. Students are punctual, conscientious and follow instructions well. They cooperate productively with each other in lessons. Many students develop their self-confidence, but some teachers do not always give students sufficient opportunities to take the responsibility for their own learning of which they are capable.
- The best lessons are well structured and include varied activities which relate well to students' understanding and experiences. In an excellent geography lesson, the teacher encouraged small groups of students to analyse and then give feedback individually about the severe flooding issues in the United Kingdom. The students responded very well to what they saw as a contemporary and very relevant topic for discussion. However, while many teachers use a wide range of activities in lessons, these are often rushed, with insufficient time allowed for students to reflect and consider wider issues. Teachers talk too much in a few lessons and students become passive and listless.
- Teachers assess students' knowledge and understanding in lessons mostly through questioning and observation, but these approaches are often insufficiently challenging and do not encourage all students to respond. In a small minority of lessons, teachers use other methods effectively to check learning such as quick starter tests, quizzes, mini-whiteboards and peer assessment. These activities motivate students and help the teacher to assess everyone's progress more effectively. The quality of written feedback in students' work is too variable, with some teachers providing detailed, constructive and timely responses whilst others return students' work which they have assessed and corrected much less thoroughly.

- The development of students’ skills in English and mathematics in lessons varies too much across different subjects. The promotion of numeracy skills is satisfactory in geography, economics and psychology. Students in sociology and politics receive particularly good encouragement to use precise language and terminology.
- The promotion of e-learning is under developed in most lessons and often limited to teachers using electronic slide presentations or showing video clips without explaining their context sufficiently clearly. Teachers do not enable more extensive use of ILT, for example through interactive learning or in research methodologies, and the enthusiasm and interest which e-learning might generate for many students are underexploited. Classrooms are frequently dowdy and uninspiring.
- Support for students is satisfactory, including advice and guidance. The college’s new tutorial system is helping most students to understand their targets and action plans, but this new initiative still needs time to become successful across all groups of students. Students find teachers helpful and approachable regarding a range of academic and personal matters. Teachers respond well to particular problems, for example introducing additional sociology and psychology workshop sessions to make up for recent staff absences and to meet specialist subject needs.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in the curriculum content of many subjects, for example through the analysis of stereotypes in psychology and considerations of gender, ethnicity and social class dimensions in sociology, psychology and economics. Teachers establish a strong culture of respect and sensitivity to which students respond very well. Students conduct themselves with great consideration for their teachers and peers.

English and modern foreign languages	
Learning programmes for 16-18	Good
Learning programmes for 19+	

- Teaching, learning and assessment in English and modern foreign languages are good. This reflects the improved outcomes in the subject areas and the success of a number of recent interventions by managers. Students make good, or very good, progress in the majority of modern foreign languages, but are less successful in English. Managers have taken effective actions to manage poor performance through closer monitoring of students’ attendance and progress. Students develop good language speaking skills and are able to articulate complex ideas confidently in both English and modern foreign languages.
- Support for students is very good and builds their confidence. Teachers provide highly effective support for students both inside and outside the classroom. The initial assessment of students’ skills is accurate in identifying their individual support needs. For example, in modern foreign languages, bilingual students attend discrete, fast-track lessons. Other students have regular individual learning sessions with language assistants to enhance their language skills.
- Communications with parents and/or carers are excellent through regular email contact, in which teachers provide clear feedback on students’ targets and the support the students require.
- Staff demonstrate high levels of expertise, knowledge and passion for their subject areas, and this inspires students to want to achieve well. All staff are highly reflective practitioners who strive constantly to improve their teaching and who work within an ethos of mutual support and collaboration. Modern foreign languages teachers are all native speakers who motivate students well through their consistent use of the target language.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan very effectively for the use of a wide range of tasks and assessment to develop and check learning. They use individual activities to inspire students’ interest. The pace of the lessons is highly appropriate and teachers use group and pair work

very well to ensure they get the best out of their students and enable them to make good progress.

- In the weaker classes, teachers do not always challenge students sufficiently and tend to confuse the objectives of the lesson with its overall aim, by planning for the completion of tasks rather than what students will learn from them. The pace of classes is sometimes slow. Students in these lessons are too passive and make only reasonable progress.
- The majority of written feedback on students' assessed work is detailed, informative and brings about improvement. In some English classes, students transpose feedback from previous work to the start of the next assignment as an effective strategy to focus on developing their skills further. Teachers' feedback in modern foreign languages is precise and detailed and couched in the target language. A small minority of written feedback is imprecise and lacks sufficient detail.
- The quality of verbal feedback in classes varies too much. In the better lessons, questioning is challenging and probing. Students articulate their answers fully and demonstrate finely honed analytical and thinking skills. However, teachers do not direct their questions at individual students in too many instances. They allow insufficient time for reflection.
- The use of ILT in lessons is under developed. Teachers tend to use it only for pre-prepared presentations which do not always engage students' interest sufficiently well. In the better classes, staff use ILT effectively for target setting and make good use of interactive electronic websites to stimulate students' interest.
- Students develop good English skills through constant development and reinforcement of their vocabulary, linguistic analytical skills and grammar. The integration of mathematics skills with lessons is under developed.
- Advice and guidance are very good. Staff use a flexible and appropriate approach at the start of the academic year to ensure students make the right choices about the courses they study. A team of specialist interviewers who is familiar with the subjects provides expert advice and guidance. Communications within this team are highly effective, which ensures students receive very good support when applying to higher education courses. The team acknowledges the need for greater focus in future on students' employment choices.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is highly effective. Teachers and students treat each other with respect and dignity. Students feel safe and confident in lessons. Staff review the make up of student groups prior to the start of the academic year to choose texts and other learning resources that reflect the diversity of the student intake. Teachers' use of examples relating to equality and diversity is very prominent in lesson planning and this enhances students' awareness of different cultures.

Business management, accounting and finance

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Outcomes for students have improved significantly on the majority of vocational and academic courses and are now broadly in line with national averages. However, success rates are declining and remain significantly below national averages for many students on advanced and intermediate level programmes. Most students make satisfactory progress in their studies.
- In many lessons, teachers develop a collaborative working relationship with students and create a purposeful environment for learning. Students enjoy their studies and retention rates are high. They value highly the support they receive from their teachers. Students respond well to the tasks they are given in classes and most are able to work quickly and confidently to complete them. They use ILT well as an aid to research and the quality of assignment work is good.

- On advanced level courses, the motivation and interest of some students in lessons are poor. Teachers are not always successful in ensuring that the tasks they set for students are appropriate for the wide range of abilities in the group. Some students do not participate effectively in all learning activities and teachers do not encourage them sufficiently well to make notes or to take part in discussions during group work.
- Planning for learning is under developed among some teachers. In the better lessons, teachers prepare their lessons carefully. Learning outcomes and assessment strategies are clear and comprehensive and support the development of students' knowledge very effectively. Staff use a range of initial assessment techniques promptly and well to establish students' levels of ability, including their skills in English and mathematics. Activities to assess learning take full account of the wide range of students' prior abilities. Teachers give detailed consideration to how they will challenge more able students to extend and develop their knowledge.
- In less effective lessons, teachers' weaker planning means that students progress slowly and do not participate sufficiently well. Teachers talk too much and lessons lack an appropriate pace and focus. Activities do not take sufficient account of the wide range of students' abilities. Learning outcomes do not always focus on what students should achieve, and assessment for learning is limited to a narrow and unimaginative range of strategies.
- Teachers' use of questioning is ineffective in too many lessons and does not enable teachers to determine whether all students make the expected progress. Teachers tend to tell students what they know rather than allowing them to be creative and use their prior knowledge to explore a deeper understanding of key concepts.
- The quality of feedback on students' assessed work is variable and target setting is not always sufficiently specific to support students to improve their work further. Where teachers do this well, they have created online discussion fora to enable continuous dialogue with students about how to improve their assignments. In some instances, the feedback on marked work indicates clearly to students what they need to do to develop their skills and knowledge further.
- Other teachers miss opportunities to provide sufficiently detailed written evaluations of students' work. The correction of spelling and grammar mistakes is insufficiently thorough. Targets agreed with students often lack clarity regarding how students will achieve them.
- Teachers do not focus sufficiently on the development of students' employability skills. The college has identified this weakness as an area for improvement. Some teachers integrate the development of students' verbal and numerical skills well with the teaching of their subject. However, students do not participate in work placements. Teachers do not routinely link transferable skills demonstrated in the classroom, such as communication and team working, to their use in the workplace.
- Support for students applying for jobs and university is good. Students value the role of the college's careers centre in helping them with completing application forms and personal statements. A high proportion of students on A-level courses progress to university.
- Students learn in diverse groups and a culturally rich environment. They feel safe at the college. In the best lessons, teachers challenge students confidently regarding issues of culture. They adapt learning resources appropriately to reflect the diversity of student groups. However, the promotion of equality and diversity in some lessons does not always reflect the make up of particular cohorts of students. Some learning materials are too Eurocentric and teachers do not challenge students' cultural stereotyping.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders and governors have set an ambitious mission and vision for the college which emphasises high expectations for students' success. The recent restructuring of the college has streamlined its management and has resulted in gains in efficiency. The principal conveys clear information to the staff about the college's progress towards achieving its aims at the beginning of each new academic year.

- Most staff have a good understanding of how they contribute to achieving the college's objectives. Meetings between assistant principals and departmental managers help to promote a more consistent approach to teaching and learning across departments and have started to lead to the sharing of some good practice.
- Managers at all levels in the college have a clear responsibility for monitoring and improving students' achievements in their subject areas. They hold frequent meetings to review performance which include a clear focus on the progress individual students are making. The college met, or exceeded, most of its key targets for students' performance in 2011/12. Targets set for the current year are realistic but are not always sufficiently ambitious, particularly regarding students' achievement rates.
- Governors have a useful range of skills and expertise which benefits the college. Their specialist knowledge has enabled them to advise the college appropriately on performance management. Governors are well informed about the issues facing the college and what aspects of the provision require further improvement. They monitor key aspects of performance regularly and are involved fully in setting a clear agenda for improvement for the college. The composition of the governing body, and the college staff, does not reflect closely that of the student community.
- Strategies to improve the standards of teaching, learning and assessment helped to increase the proportion of students who completed their qualifications successfully in 2011/12, from well below the national average in many cases to above and, in some cases, well above the national rate. However, this improvement has been more marked in some areas of the college than others and students' success rates remain low in a minority of subjects. Too many students still make insufficient progress in their studies. Staff understand, and appreciate, the importance of clear accountability and performance management in order to bring about further improvements in the current year.
- Professional development activities last year had a strong focus on developing the skills of staff to carry out accurate self-assessment and to manage curriculum areas and courses more effectively. This training has been largely effective. Strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment are identified clearly in the college's self-assessment reports. Self-assessment is evaluative, mostly accurate and integrated well, with identified actions in the quality improvement plan.
- The college worked hard last year to ensure that most staff received a formal appraisal of their performance. Despite this, the link between performance management and the outcomes of lesson observations for teaching staff is under developed. Having acknowledged this area for improvement, managers have ensured better coordination of appraisals and lesson observations this year.
- Managers responsible for quality assurance have improved the arrangements for monitoring the college's provision, and this has had a significant impact on students' success rates. The college uses a number of well-designed systems for the regular review of performance at course and departmental level. Most course teams use data about students and other information such as complaints well to identify and resolve areas of concern in curriculum areas.
- The college offers a very broad choice of subjects and qualifications for students from entry level courses to higher education programmes. More than two thirds of students travel from outside the borough to the college to take advantage of this diverse range of provision. Managers base the curriculum offer on a well-considered analysis of qualifications which leads to opportunities for students to progress to employment and higher education. Many departments offer extensive work experience for students and have good relationships with employers.
- The college recognises that the gathering and analysis of students' and other users' feedback is an area for development. Whilst a network of course representatives is in place and some very good practice exists in collecting and responding to students' views, this practice is too variable across the college. The dissemination of outcomes from student surveys is not always prompt and the college does not yet have a systematic way of monitoring issues raised in tutorials.

- The college provides an inclusive, respectful and safe environment for students. Cross-college activities reinforce students' understanding of equality and diversity well. The college has been successful in reducing the gap in achievements between groups of students and most notably for those students with identified learning needs. However, it has been slow to identify the possible causes for the underperformance of men, particularly on advanced level courses, and this remains a recurring and significant area for improvement. Too much teaching does not meet students' individual learning needs.
- Policies for safeguarding students are wide ranging and detailed. Recruitment checks on all relevant staff are thorough. Governors receive appropriate training on their safeguarding responsibilities. Prompt recording and resolution of any safeguarding incidents are a priority of the college. Risk assessments for vulnerable students are particularly comprehensive.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Richmond upon Thames College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes
	Overall effectiveness	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	3
Sport	2
Visual Arts	2
Social sciences	3
Psychology	3

English	2
Modern foreign languages	2
Accounting and finance	3
Business management	3

Provider details

Richmond upon Thames College	
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 3,753
	Part-time: 1,637
Principal/CEO	David Ansell
Date of previous inspection	January 2007
Website address	www.rutc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	204	124	316	11	2,749	57	29	0
Part-time	129	828	151	366	590	171	0	75
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	28	36	43	16	2	6		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	54							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None 							

Additional socio-economic information

Richmond upon Thames College is a large general further education college located in the London Borough of Richmond. The college has one main site in Twickenham but serves a very wide catchment area, attracting students from 28 of the 33 London boroughs. The main employment in the area is in the management and professional sectors. The unemployment rate is one of the lowest in London. The number of people in Richmond schools attaining five GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics was above the national average in 2011/12, having fallen slightly from the previous year.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Moore HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the director of performance and standards as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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