

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		15-18 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Success rates for students on A-level and advanced level vocational courses have improved since the last inspection and are now high. A high proportion of A-level students achieve a high grade and students with relatively low levels of attainment at GCSE achieve well.
- Students develop independent learning skills well through the careful attention teachers and support staff pay to improving study skills during lessons and through additional support and study sessions.
- A high proportion of students on advanced level courses progress to higher education.
- Students develop their confidence well; they enjoy the challenging activities that teachers provide and respond well to the detailed feedback teachers give them. Students' behaviour is exemplary and students treat each other and staff with a high degree of respect.
- Teachers, managers and governors monitor students' progress closely and take prompt action to address any concerns about the quality of provision. Individual tutorials are used effectively to ensure students remain on target to complete their studies.
- College leaders have focused resolutely on dealing successfully with the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result, they have raised standards and provide the opportunities and support students need to succeed.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not all managers have taken the actions needed to bring about rapid improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Too few students on a significant minority of AS-level courses and intermediate vocational courses achieve their qualification.
- Not all students take part in the work-related activities that the college is increasingly providing and do not have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to gain employment.
- Not all teachers set learning objectives that provide sufficient challenge for the more able students or explain to students what they should do in order to achieve their targets.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Set realistic, achievable performance targets throughout the college, and ensure all managers plan and carry out the actions necessary to achieve these within their area of responsibility.
- Enrol students who have achieved lower grades in their English or mathematics GCSE on a qualification that they can achieve and that prepares them to progress onto a GCSE when they are ready to study for a higher grade.
- Extend work-related activities to all students so that they are well equipped to progress into employment.
- Develop better links with employers in order to secure work-related activities and to inform the college's continued development of a curriculum that develops the skills students need to gain employment.
- Increase the range and effectiveness of teaching and learning methods that teachers use to develop students' higher order thinking skills. Ensure all teachers plan to meet individual students' needs by setting clear learning objectives that are achieved through the activities in which students take part during lessons.
- Provide staff with training to ensure that they develop the confidence to plan lessons that celebrate and develop students' understanding of diversity.
- Set clear expectations for all staff about students' attendance at lessons and ensure all staff are using effective strategies to help students meet these expectations.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Students' achievements improved significantly in 2012/13 after three years of gradual improvement, and now a very large majority of students achieve their qualification. Students' achievements on A- and AS - level courses are now comparable to those in similar colleges. Students on advanced level vocational courses achieve well.
- A high proportion of students on A-level courses achieve high grades and most make good progress relative to their attainment at GCSE. However, on a significant minority of AS-level courses, the proportion of students who achieve their qualification has not improved as rapidly and success rates remain just below the national average.
- The proportion of students successfully achieving their intermediate qualifications has improved considerably since the last inspection but is still not high enough. Too many students do not achieve a grade C or above in GCSE English or mathematics despite improving their abilities in these subjects.
- There are no significant differences in outcomes between students from different ethnic heritages. Students who need additional help with their studies achieve well. Students in receipt of financial support are as successful as other students. However, White British males are slightly less successful than female students or other males.
- Students on vocational courses develop appropriate vocational skills through the good partnerships the college has established with local industries. Recently the college has started offering some imaginative and exciting work-related activities to the most able AS- and A-level students. For example, two students have been appointed to a hospital members' board. These opportunities are not open to all students so many do not sufficiently develop the skills they need to gain employment.
- Students develop their independent learning skills well, particularly in the second year of two-year courses. Students make good, independent use of the high quality resources and learning

activities available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students develop good communication skills and improve their confidence well. Many report that the staff at the college have successfully awoken and cultivated their interest in learning. They make good use of the wide range of academic, social, cultural and sporting activities that take place outside lessons and enjoy their time at college. Despite this, a small minority of students' attendance at lessons requires improvement.

- The proportion of students progressing to higher education has improved and is now high. Teachers and managers have successfully developed partnerships with higher education institutions as well as a good programme of visits and talks. These successfully encourage students to apply for, and obtain, places on university courses. However, the college has not paid the same attention to improving progression from intermediate to advanced level courses or employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. As a result, the college has steadily improved success rates for all groups of students since the previous inspection. Over the last two years, managers and teachers have worked relentlessly to improve the quality of teaching and learning, implementing a range of successful actions that have resulted in students making good or better progress in lessons.
- Teachers and students enjoy highly productive working relationships that promote and celebrate success within a culture of high expectation and mutual respect. Students' behaviour is exemplary. Classrooms and corridors abound with case studies of students' progression to university and employment.
- Teachers plan lessons well, paying close attention to the diverse range of students' starting points and their abilities. Most teachers include challenging activities that maintain students' interest and develop their independent learning skills. For example, in an advanced business studies lesson, students made very good progress as a result of highly interesting and inspiring teaching that developed their practical understanding of the impact of leadership styles on the motivation levels of teams as they completed different tasks. Students worked purposefully throughout the lesson, learning from each other as they planned in their groups how to complete each task.
- In the vast majority of lessons, teachers set and demand high standards from their students. They identify high level learning objectives in lesson plans and they check students' learning through directed and probing questions to explore their understanding. In an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, the teacher checked students' understanding of web and test plan design through a combination of in-depth questioning and practical assessment. In the minority of lessons where improvement is required, the teaching is insufficiently captivating and lacks sufficient pace and clear direction to challenge the more able students. In these lessons, learning objectives are often pitched too low, resulting in insufficient challenge for students.
- The college accurately identifies students' support needs when students start their course. As a result of the good learning support arrangements through the Upgrade centre, students who need extra help make at least the same levels of progress in their studies as those who do not need support. They benefit from regular highly effective individual or classroom-based support that helps them overcome difficulties in their lessons. As a result of attending specialist courses arranged through Upgrade, many learners have improved their study skills and now apply independent research skills both in lessons and in learning centres and make better progress on their course.
- Students benefit significantly from the VLE that contains good learning resources and has become a central resource to support and direct learning and assessment activities in lessons and for independent study. The college has significantly improved its use of the VLE to monitor students' progress more closely and to take very prompt action where teachers raise concerns

about students' attendance, homework, assignment completion and grades. As a result, students benefit from very good and regular individual tutorial support that ensures they remain on target to complete their studies. The college has built on its Prep programme to ensure that all students receive a similar weekly tutorial that has relevant topical content. This is complemented by classroom-based private study that has extended all students' independent learning skills. The college acknowledges tutors need to ensure greater consistency in the setting of targets on students' personal learning plans.

- The assessment of students' work is good. Teachers provide good and helpful comments on students' work that enable them to make improvements quickly. In performing arts lessons, teachers make excellent use of video and photographs of students' dance techniques to assess their skill, posture and movement through discussion, exploration and critical analysis. Consequently, students are particularly adept at assessing their own progress.
- In most subjects, teachers integrate English and mathematics in lessons, enabling students to develop confidently the language and numeracy skills relevant to their subject area. In many lessons, students regularly write short summaries from longer documents to demonstrate their understanding of key learning points. In most subjects, the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar is regular and understood by students, but in a minority of subjects teachers do not correct misspellings.
- Students benefit from good information, advice and guidance, especially in relation to their next steps and personal support. Students value the opportunity to complete extra advanced qualifications organised through the academy programme to prepare them for university. They enjoy the talks from employers about careers in their chosen sector as part of the Prep programme.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons requires improvement. In many lessons, the planning of learning does not include sufficient direct reference to equality and diversity. As a result, teachers do not have opportunities to promote positive images or challenge students' perceptions or assumptions. Where teachers have clearly identified topics for discussion in their planning, they do not always develop or have sufficient confidence to explore these in lessons.

Science Mathematics and statistics 16-19 study programmes	Good
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is reflected in the students' good performance in most subjects and high progression to university or employment. High grade pass rates, however, remain low, particularly for GCSE sciences and mathematics.
- In better lessons, students are interested and highly motivated to succeed. Teachers use the detailed student profiles to plan and teach in accordance with the students' levels of ability and use a range of activities that ensure students understand the content of lessons. In an applied science lesson, students were carefully grouped and assigned challenging tasks that helped them appreciate the impact of various factors on the ecosystem.
- Students develop their independent learning skills well. They are encouraged to research and give presentations on their findings. In chemistry, students developed flash cards to aid them with their revision. A college initiative, called Building Learning Power, is also making learners more independent, self-reflective about their work and keen to improve through setting stretching targets.
- In less effective lessons, especially in mathematics, activities are repetitive, the pace is slow, and the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. A small number of lessons do not contain activities that hold all students' interest or help students to make progress in lessons. Teachers do not always ensure that all students are participating fully in the lesson and not all teachers check understanding effectively.

- Students use information technology well to work independently and to produce high quality work. In a science lesson, students prepared high quality presentations incorporating short videos to explain the properties of different bands of the electromagnetic spectrum. The VLE is well developed and highly valued by the students as a tool to help them learn and to monitor their progress. It contains good resources and homework tasks, interesting assignments and constructive comments from teachers.
- Students greatly appreciate the excellent support provided by the teachers. Attendance at additional science and mathematics workshops is good. At these, students work independently on topics and tasks of their choosing and make good use of the support that is available.
- Teachers have raised the standard of students' work through much-improved and effective assessment of learning and progress. Homework is set regularly and marked with very detailed and constructive feedback. In the sciences, students take frequent tests to check their understanding, but these are less common in mathematics.
- Activities that help students understand careers in the sciences are good and linked well to classroom activities. For example, the outcomes of a visit to a zoo contributed to students producing high quality work in an assignment in the advanced level applied sciences. Teachers have developed highly effective links with both the local hospital and university which help to make students more ambitious and improve opportunities they have to progress to higher education or employment.
- Students develop their English skills well and teachers carefully correct spelling on marked work. Students develop good communication skills and science teachers place a good emphasis on the need to provide concise and precise definitions of concepts and terms. Students' development of mathematical skills is also good. Teachers provide useful workshops and extra sessions in all the sciences to support the development of the mathematical skills required.
- All students feel welcome, included, supported and respected. Teachers promote diversity appropriately. For example, in physics, discussions on creation and different religious and secular views are an integral part of learning about the solar system. Well-known women physicists are also promoted as role models.

**Sport
Public services**

Good

16-19 study programmes

- The high expectations teachers set lead to students producing high standards of work and securing good outcomes. Most students on advanced level courses develop a wide range of skills and knowledge that help them progress to university or employment.
- Teachers plan lessons starting with imaginative tasks that interest and motivate students. Activities build on students' previous learning and students apply the knowledge and skills they learn well. For example, they study theories of team behaviour and then apply them to their own experience of sporting teams. Students use lessons, tutorials, study sessions and homework well to develop their independent study skills. For example, intermediate level public services students have developed a good circuit training programme by themselves as a result of careful planning and encouragement by the teacher.
- Sports students develop high standards of performance and coaching skills in sports such as volleyball, basketball and football. Students develop their skills well through their participation in a wide range of sports and matches with other colleges and clubs. Some develop their skills to national level, for example two students reached the national trampolining standard.
- Teachers assess students' knowledge and understanding throughout lessons well using techniques such as group feedback on tasks and peer assessment of skills in the sports hall. Teachers make good use of directed questioning to prompt students to think more carefully about the topic they are studying in order to gain a greater understanding.

- Students make good progress as a result of the good support offered by teachers who have excellent knowledge of their students and are quick to respond to requests for help or further explanation of work. Students have tutorials where stretching targets are set and teachers regularly review students' progress towards these. Teachers react quickly to any late homework submission, poor attendance or lateness to ensure students keep on track.
- Second year advanced level students' written work is not of a consistently high standard as some tasks are not sufficiently challenging. Teachers' comments do not always tell students how to improve their grades or the presentation of their work.
- In many lessons students develop their English skills well. Teachers set challenging tasks in which students produce concise explanations of key terminology related, for example, to sports nutrition or criminal law.
- Programmes are well designed and contain a good range of qualifications through which students improve their skills, abilities and ambitions to progress into relevant higher education or employment. Staff give good advice, so that early in the second year of study students know which university course they are applying for or what employment opportunities there are in the public services or sports industries.
- Teachers and students celebrate students' achievements well, through reporting success in competitive sports in newsletters and notices or displaying information about the achievements of past students. There is a culture of strong mutual respect between students and teachers with good behaviour and discipline.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The Principal, governors and managers have set a clear mission and vision which focus on the college meeting the needs of the local community well. Staff and governors share a common set of values that focus on improving standards. This has led to better outcomes for learners and a concentration by staff across the college on maintaining these. Although improvements at AS level have been slower than anticipated, the majority of outcomes have improved. College leaders have ensured that a wholesale staff restructure and the implementation of more rigorous performance management systems have mostly had a positive effect on students' outcomes. In a small number of curriculum areas, such as mathematics, changes have yet to have a sufficiently positive impact on students' outcomes.
- Senior managers have effectively developed and nurtured strategic partnerships to ensure the college provides good opportunities for students to progress into higher levels of learning and employment. Staff throughout the college listen carefully to what students want to achieve through their further education and carefully design programmes that help them succeed. Governors and managers set and monitor targets that have contributed to improvements in performance. However, some targets are unrealistic and are insufficiently useful to bring about actions for improvement.
- Governors bring much experience to their role and know the college well. They gain a good understanding of teaching, learning and assessment through the scrutiny of success rates, outcomes of progress reviews, lesson observation grades and, more recently, through visiting lessons. They have effected change in the management structure ensuring there are clearer lines of accountability and the Principal and other senior managers are challenged well.
- Strategies for improving the standard of teaching, learning and assessment have been implemented well and are supported by useful guidance for teachers on 'The Richard Taunton Way'. Teachers and managers talk with a passion about how they have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have introduced projects to tackle areas for improvement identified in the college's evaluation of its provision. Some have made a positive difference, but others have yet to have their effectiveness evaluated. Changes in classroom practice have effectively engaged students and improved lessons resulting in more students achieving high grades.

- Managers have been trained in how to manage the performance of their staff and most now do this well. Staff have personal development reviews which take into consideration a wide range of elements to evaluate performance. Following these, a training plan is produced and delivered that focuses well on training staff to meet individual students' needs. Managers monitor the quality of lessons more effectively than at the last inspection. This has been welcomed by staff and has assisted in developing a culture of openness and trust. Managers have improved students' outcomes through a support programme in which teachers and managers, whose course success rates are below the required standard, are held to account.
- The annual cycle of quality assurance is coherent and provides an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment from which further improvements are planned. The college's evaluation of its provision uses a wide range of evidence, such as course reviews, teaching, learning and assessment reports, outcomes of lesson observations and student feedback reports, with integrity and rigour to inform professional development. However, not all formal lesson observation reports and course reviews provide enough detail and some do not identify the actions required to secure further improvements.
- Tutors, teachers and managers monitor students' progress meticulously. They communicate well with students and parents to ensure everyone knows what students need to do in order to meet their targets. Staff take swift action to support students and have improved the quantity and quality of homework they set which helps students develop their independent learning skills. As a result, more students pass their qualification and a higher proportion gain high grades.
- Managers have reviewed and changed the range of courses to ensure the curriculum is in harmony with the college's mission and better meets the needs of students and the local community. This has included removing courses and collaborating with other providers better placed to deliver some courses. The literacy strategy is embedded in lessons and assessments. There is a wide range of activities that develop students' employability skills including industry week, visiting employers and internships. However, links with employers resulting in more meaningful work-related activities are yet to be fully developed.
- College managers have put in place a good range of support for students to tackle the gaps in achievements between different groups. For example, better individual support is now provided early in the course for students who need extra help, extra support from tutors is provided in the Upgrade Centre, and better support is provided to students with minority ethnic heritages through better engagement with parents. As a result, gaps in achievement between different groups have reduced.
- The college is a secure environment and students confirm they feel safe. Health and safety are promoted well. Policies for safeguarding are in place and safeguarding incidents are resolved promptly. The college complies fully with statutory requirements for safeguarding students and risk is managed appropriately.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	2
Mathematics and statistics	3
Sport	2
Public services	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Sixth form college							
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,228							
	Part-time: 48							
Principal/CEO	Ms Alice Wrighton							
Date of previous inspection	October 2011							
Website address	www.richardtaunton.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	-	-	234	9	966	19	-	-
Part-time	-	-	4	28	6	10	-	-
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Funding received from	EFA, SFA							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Contextual information

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College is a small sixth form college based in Southampton, Hampshire. A large majority of students are on A- and AS-level courses and an increasing number of students follow vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level. Students' average qualifications on entry are below those of most sixth form colleges. The majority of students live in Southampton and 41% are from Black and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of school pupils in Southampton attaining at least five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C is improving but is slightly below the national average. The proportion of the population with a higher education qualification is well below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Steven Tucker HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Deputy Principal 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 learners' 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 learners 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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