

K College

General further education college

Inspection dates		4 – 8 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-4
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Inadequate-4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Inadequate-4
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is inadequate because:

- The continued uncertainty over plans for the college's future existence is severely and adversely affecting the learner experience. The quality of provision has declined and is not good enough in too many curriculum areas.
- The proportion of students successfully completing qualifications is too low in significant areas of the college's provision, including on courses in English and mathematics, on apprenticeship programmes and on AS-level courses.
- Too many students fail to make adequate progress in relation to their starting points and not enough achieve high grades. The development of students' English and mathematics skills is weak and too few students, including those on apprenticeship programmes, achieve to their full potential.
- Managers have been unable to secure a trend of improvement in students' success over time. In too many subject areas, success rates have declined and are inadequate.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate with too few lessons being good or better. The standard of teaching and learning is too variable across different courses and across the college's campuses.
- Too much teaching is insufficiently challenging and uninspiring with lessons not planned to take into account the different needs of individual students. Not all teachers have sufficiently high aspirations for their students.
- Arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Strategies to bring about improvement in the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment have been unsuccessful.
- The rate and pace of improvement are too slow and the college has insufficient resources and capacity to make the necessary changes to improve the quality of provision and the student experience. While recent changes to the management structure are positive and the acting principal and other senior leaders do have a realistic view of the very significant challenges ahead, leaders and managers have not been sufficiently effective in raising standards.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all relevant parties work together swiftly and decisively to secure a sustainable future for the college, its students and the community it serves. Remove the uncertainty over the future viability of the college and rapidly implement a solution that will provide stability to enable sustainable improvement to the quality of provision and the student experience.
- Urgently raise standards in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all campuses by:
 - implementing a system for the robust and accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment including, but not confined to, observation of lessons
 - using the findings from evaluation to provide tailored support and training to teachers to improve and enhance their practice
 - implementing an effective performance management system that holds teachers accountable for the quality of their work and for their students' outcomes.
- Rapidly improve the teaching of English and mathematics, and students' outcomes in these subjects, by:
 - making sure that lesson activities are designed to take into account individual students' needs and ability levels
 - ensuring that all teachers reinforce the importance of English and mathematics, both in their lessons and when marking students' work
 - improving the organisation, coordination and management of English and mathematics provision to secure high quality provision for all students an all campuses.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management to ensure that staff are held to account for their areas of responsibility and to enable significant improvements to the quality of provision and the student experience. Develop managers' monitoring and evaluation skills, their understanding and use of data, and ensure that they implement quality systems and processes fully.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
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- Too few students make adequate progress relative to their starting points and not enough achieve high grades. Too much variation exists in the performance of students at different campuses. While the number of students that complete their qualifications successfully has improved from a low base, the proportion of students that is successful is below the level of similar colleges on many courses. Managers have been unable to establish a trend of improvement over time and success rates in too many subject areas have declined and are inadequate.
- Measures taken by staff to increase the number of students who stay on courses have not proven sufficiently successful and too many leave their courses in the first half term of the academic year. While students' behaviour in lessons is generally good, their attendance and punctuality require improvement. The standard of students' work varies significantly but in too many subjects teachers do not set high enough standards for students to achieve.

- The proportion of apprentices completing qualifications successfully has not improved over time and is low. Far too many apprentices make slow progress and do not complete their training within the planned time. Pass rates on AS-level courses have declined markedly and are inadequate; too few students progress to the second year of their A-level studies and of those that do too few are challenged to achieve to their potential.
- Initiatives to close performance gaps between different groups of learners have not been wholly successful. The performance of males relative to females has been variable over time, and at advanced level female students are much more successful than males. Similar variations over time and between levels of learning exist for students needing extra help with their studies compared with those who do not.
- Students are not sufficiently well prepared for their next steps on too many courses. While work experience is used very effectively in a few subject areas, including travel and tourism and catering, in most subjects not enough teachers make use of work experience to develop students' employability skills and prepare them for the world of work. Teachers do generally provide adequate support to help students to develop broader skills that contribute to their personal and social development.
- The extent to which students develop good skills in English and mathematics is inadequate. Standards in functional skills provision have deteriorated over time and success rates have declined from being low in 2011/12 to an unacceptable level in 2012/13. Too few students succeed in achieving A* to C grades in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Students' progression to higher levels of learning and into employment requires improvement. The proportion of students moving from foundation to intermediate level is variable across different subjects. For example, in plumbing it is high, but in health and social care and art and design it is low. Progression rates from intermediate to advanced level are low across most subjects. The collection and analysis of student destination data require improvement.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate and indicative of the low success rates and considerable differences in students' outcomes across different sites, courses and levels. Too many students experience teaching that is uninspiring and poorly planned, including apprentices for whom the standard of training and assessment is poor. Too many lessons are inadequate or require improvement with too few being good or better.
- In too many lessons, students do not make adequate progress and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students should achieve. Teachers tend to dominate lessons and do not provide enough opportunities for students to explore topics or find solutions to problems. The pace of learning is often too slow and students are not challenged sufficiently. Teachers use a limited range of activities to interest and motivate students and do not make sufficient use of information about students' previous learning to plan lessons.
- Most teachers have relevant experience and expertise in their specialist subjects. In the minority of highly effective lessons teachers use their subject knowledge well and link theory to practice to engage students in learning. In these lessons teachers are highly supportive of their students and working relationships are extremely positive. These lessons are in the minority and more typically teachers do not motivate, enthuse or engage students sufficiently in lessons.
- Teachers manage student behaviour appropriately and low level disruption is minimal. However, students' poor attendance and punctuality on many programmes affect learning adversely. Teachers take insufficient action to instil in students the notion that such behaviour has a negative impact on their ability to learn, to maintain good progress and to develop good time-keeping necessary for employment. Too many teachers readily accept that students come to lessons not prepared to learn.
- Information and learning technology (ILT) is not used to its full potential as a learning tool. Too few teachers use ILT to enhance their practice or to make lessons more interesting, enjoyable

and memorable. Too many teachers use interactive whiteboards solely for presentations or as a projector to enable students to copy down in note form what is on the screen. The use of the college’s virtual learning environment (VLE) varies considerably on different courses as does the quality of printed learning resources.

- Initial assessment arrangements enable staff to identify students’ support needs accurately. However, support for students with additional learning needs, including for literacy and numeracy, is not always provided in a timely manner. Teachers do not use challenging targets or monitor students’ progress closely enough to ensure they make the progress expected.
- Teachers’ feedback to students on how to improve their work varies considerably. In the best cases, teachers provide students with detailed and constructive feedback, but in too many instances, teachers fail to inform students how they could develop their skills further. During lessons, teachers do not check students’ understanding adequately. Teachers’ checking of students’ spelling and grammar in coursework is not sufficiently supportive to help them improve.
- Teaching on English and mathematics courses is inadequate. Frequent staff changes caused by teachers leaving the college have resulted in a dysfunctional curriculum where too many students fail to develop the appropriate skills. While senior managers are aware of the problems on English and mathematics courses, recent changes to practice and procedures have yet to have any positive impact.
- Information, advice and guidance to support learning require improvement. While the pre-course advice and guidance given to students has been revised recently, and the number of students leaving their courses early has declined, too many still leave very early in the academic year, particularly in construction. The quality of advice and guidance for students leaving courses or for those completing and wanting to progress varies considerably between different courses and across the college’s campuses.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons requires improvement. Teachers do not plan the integration of diversity themes within their subjects well enough and often miss opportunities to extend students’ learning through naturally occurring opportunities in lessons.

<p>Early years and playwork</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and this reflects the variable outcomes for students. The proportion of students completing qualifications successfully is high at foundation level, but low at intermediate and advanced levels. Students enjoy their courses and most make adequate progress. Students are punctual and settle quickly to work during lessons. Most students who achieve their qualifications progress to the next level of learning or into relevant employment.
- Teachers help students to develop a satisfactory range of knowledge and skills to prepare them for working with children. Students gain in self-confidence, become reflective practitioners and improve their communication, problem-solving and creative skills. However, teachers do not train students in the use of interactive whiteboards, a skill they will need for future employment.
- Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge and experience. They make good use of their current professional practice to help students understand how topics learned apply in a work setting. For example, advanced-level students created an activity suitable for young children using natural materials. They analysed the importance of planning and risk assessment within the constraints of an early years setting, taking into account the age and ability of the children.

- Teachers’ planning of lessons requires improvement. Although teachers accurately identify the different abilities of students at the start of courses, they do not use this information well enough to plan lessons that are challenging for all. Teachers do not ensure that those who are more able achieve high grades. They do not make adequate use of ILT to enliven lessons and enhance learning.
- In the best lessons, teachers are effective in using students’ experiences gained on work placements to link theory to practice. For example, foundation-level students successfully learned about the importance of infection control when working with children through a practical hand-washing activity. Students were able to identify the potential hazards and risks to health of poor hand hygiene.
- Students produce work that is of a satisfactory standard. They demonstrate a good understanding of confidentiality, inclusive practice and aspects of child development. Students use computers competently to present their work but do not use a wide enough range of sources for their research, as shown by their limited bibliographies.
- Teachers do not plan assessments well enough. They use an insufficient variety of activities to fully motivate and challenge all students and rely too heavily on a limited range of strategies to check students’ knowledge and skills in lessons. Consequently, lessons become repetitive and uninteresting. Teachers provide good verbal feedback on students’ work, but their written feedback is too variable in quality and does not adequately help students to understand how to make improvements.
- Teachers have improved the advice and guidance given to students before coming onto a course. However, the number of students who do not stay to the end of their courses is too high. Teachers provide regular individual guidance to students which enables most of them to make satisfactory progress. Students particularly value the good pastoral support offered by teachers.
- The extent to which students develop skills in English and mathematics requires improvement. Teachers accurately assess students’ abilities in these subjects at the start of the course, but too few students pass their functional skills qualifications.
- Teachers use effective strategies to ensure that students learn to respect differences in other people and that they understand the importance of perceiving each child as a unique individual. For example, advanced-level students identified adaptations necessary to provide support for children with learning difficulties or those from different backgrounds. Students understand how to keep themselves and children safe.

<p>Building and construction</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. This correlates with a decline in the proportion of students completing qualifications successfully, a sharp increase in the proportion of students that leave courses early, and low success rates for the small number of apprentices. The standard of work produced by learners in workshops is good in plumbing, carpentry and electrical installation. Apprentices develop good practical skills. Student attendance and punctuality are poor. Too many students are frequently absent and the starts of lessons are often interrupted by late arrivals.
- Teachers plan practical lessons well and use their technical skills and site experiences effectively to devise interesting tasks that challenge students. For example, in a carpentry lesson, students produced accurate wood joints and were able to explain how these are used in industry. In a small minority of less successful practical lessons, students produce work that is of a poor

standard and teachers use insufficient strategies to help them improve. For example, in brickwork, students complete tasks at a commercial pace but do not pay enough attention to the accuracy and finish of their work.

- In theory lessons, teachers do not use a broad enough range of activities to involve all students and to develop their confidence. Students learn and make progress slowly because the work is not challenging enough to motivate them. Teachers set tasks that are mundane and repetitive and students lose interest quickly.
- Teachers use powerpoint presentations frequently to illustrate key points, but their use of innovative and interactive technology is under-developed. Teachers do not provide enough exciting interactive learning materials for students and apprentices to use when studying at home or in the workplace. They do not use adaptive software enough to support those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that are in need of extra help.
- During lessons, teachers use questioning techniques and group discussions well to check students’ learning. In workshops, students receive useful verbal feedback on how to improve their techniques, speed and accuracy. Teachers mark students’ and apprentices’ work carefully but do not provide enough support to those who find the work difficult; nor do they present new challenges to those who find it easy.
- Apprentices do not make swift enough progress in completing their portfolios. Assessors rely too heavily on workplace testimonies and not enough on direct observation of apprentices’ skills. They provide insufficiently detailed written feedback following assessment and do not set clear enough targets for apprentices to improve their work.
- Teachers ensure that students practise and improve their use of mathematics through interpretations of site drawings and measuring and evaluating the accuracy of their work. However, teachers and assessors pay insufficient attention to developing students’ and apprentices’ use of English and fail to correct spelling and grammatical errors in their written work.
- Staff do not provide clear enough information to students about the subjects prior to the start of courses. Many students leave the college or transfer to other courses soon after enrolling on a construction course. Teachers do not make enough use of the assessment of students’ prior learning at the start of the course to plan lessons that are challenging for students of all abilities.
- Teachers monitor students’ progress well. Students frequently update their learning plans and negotiate new targets as they complete existing ones. Most students who stay to the end of their courses achieve their qualification. Students value the support provided by staff in overcoming barriers to learning.
- Teachers help foster good working and social relationships in class and challenge students’ inappropriate behaviour and comments well. They emphasise the need for students to have positive attitudes about people from different backgrounds. For example, a teacher used a presentation for Remembrance Day based on a local black soldier, the son of a joiner, who became the first black British officer to lead a unit into battle. However, teachers miss opportunities to create discussions around broader diversity themes during lessons and in workplace reviews.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and this is reflected in a decline in the numbers of students who complete their qualifications successfully and in the variable success

rates across different courses. Students' attendance and punctuality at lessons vary too much between campuses and classes. Most students who complete courses make the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment. The proportion of apprentices completing qualifications successfully is low, and for a minority, their progress is slow.

- Students on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses develop appropriate practical skills. However, due to limited experience of working on clients, students at the Folkestone and Ashford campuses are less well equipped to go into employment.
- In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of their students. Teachers plan lessons well, constantly check students' understanding and maintain a pace to learning that keeps students challenged and interested. Teachers interact well with students and encourage them to take an active part in their own learning. In these lessons, students develop good skills, such as one-length haircuts in hairdressing and hair removal techniques in beauty therapy.
- In less effective lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and students become bored. Students spend too much time working on each other or on practice model heads. Teachers fail to use a range of resources, including ILT, to reinforce and enhance learning.
- Reviews of apprentices' progress are inconsistent and require improvement. In the best cases, staff completing reviews set achievable targets with apprentices. However, in a minority of cases the targets set are insufficiently detailed to help apprentices to make progress. The quality of apprentices' reviews varies considerably as staff completing reviews do not meet on a regular basis to standardise quality systems or share good practice.
- Teachers' skills in assessing students' work are too variable. In the best lessons, teachers plan tasks well and provide good developmental feedback that helps students to improve. In less effective lessons, teachers do not plan tasks sufficiently, especially for apprentices. Assessors do not take into account apprentices' prior experience, which results in them making slow progress as they repeat skills that they have already learned.
- Salons at the Tonbridge and Dover campuses are very well equipped and provide students with a realistic working environment. Students at the Dover campus are more work-ready than those at other sites due to their regular work on clients in the college's professional standard high street salon. By contrast, students at Ashford and Folkestone campuses train in poor quality salons and are less competent in meeting industry standards of work.
- Staff at the Ashford campus provide good support to students, including help in the development of their writing skills. However, this is not the case on the other three campuses where support is not always available due to a lack of specialist staff. Pre-course information is not always clear enough to students at the start of the course and subsequently too many students leave their course early before achieving.
- Teachers plan group tutorials well and include topics that help students to gain broader life skills. Teachers' planning of individual tutorials is satisfactory, but these sessions often take place in rooms where other students complete research work. This inhibits the extent to which students are confident in discussing personal or confidential information.
- Teachers assess students' abilities in English and mathematics accurately at the start of their courses. Students develop the required literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to complete functional skills tests and to perform tasks required in employment. Teachers do not always reinforce these skills during vocational lessons when the opportunities arise.
- Students have a basic understanding of how to adapt their services to meet the needs of different client groups. However, teachers do not integrate these skills adequately in all lessons. In the best lessons, teachers provide good instruction to students on the implications of working with clients from different backgrounds or cultures, but this is not consistent across all courses on all sites

Foundation English**16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes**

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate and have resulted in consistently low success rates at foundation and intermediate levels. In too many lessons, teachers do not focus enough on the needs of individual students. In most lessons students do not develop the skills and knowledge they need to improve their English and the majority make inadequate progress.
- A minority of students improve their confidence in using English well, particularly those studying motor vehicle and child care and those on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students enjoy their learning, make good progress with their skills in using punctuation, and develop their vocabulary by learning and using new words accurately.
- Teachers' skills in planning lessons are inconsistent across the college sites and recent changes to staff and courses have not yet had sufficient impact in improving this aspect of their classroom practice. In the better lessons, teachers plan activities so that students can link what they learn to their vocational subjects, for example by being able to communicate more clearly at work. In these lessons, teachers make effective use of short film clips and interactive whiteboards to maintain students' interest.
- In most lessons however, teachers do not take into account students' previous knowledge or their current learning needs, and focus too narrowly on the requirements of qualifications. Teachers fail to identify and help students to make improvements with persistent difficulties that they have with English. They do not relate topics adequately to students' current interests, future jobs or everyday experiences. In these lessons students quickly lose interest, are uninspired and become distracted.
- Teachers do not assess students' skills in English well enough at the start of the course and thereby do not accurately identify key individual learning goals with students. Teachers' setting of specific and measurable learning targets in students' individual learning plans is very weak. Consequently, students do not know what they need to do to improve and the standard of their work is satisfactory at best.
- Teachers are not consistent in the quality of feedback they provide to students. Their written comments are insufficiently evaluative and do not provide enough guidance to help students improve. However, teachers' verbal feedback to students is mostly constructive and helpful and most use questioning well to check students' understanding in lessons.
- A small minority of classrooms do not provide a suitable learning environment and this hinders students' ability to make progress. For example, in a classroom at the Tonbridge campus, students are unable to progress adequately with writing skills as desk space is taken up by computer monitors.
- Teachers and support staff provide effective individual support for students who need extra help. Signers are effective in ensuring that hearing-impaired students can participate fully in lessons. However, teachers' management of the support staff allocated to groups of students is often insufficient and poorly planned. Teachers do not integrate the use of these staff adequately with their lessons and students do not develop the strategies and study skills they need to learn independently.
- Teachers do not plan lessons well enough to promote equality of opportunity and to enhance students' understanding of social diversity. While teachers do promote a safe and comfortable learning environment and students are generally respectful to one another, teachers frequently miss opportunities to further develop students' knowledge and understanding of broader equality and diversity themes.

Independent living and leisure skills**16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Success rates on both long and short courses have declined and are now poor. Too much variation exists in the quality of teaching and learning. Most lessons lack sufficient pace and challenge and not enough students make the progress expected of them.
- In the small minority of more effective lessons, particularly within the courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, teachers plan lessons that enthuse students. For example, one group of students learned complex dance steps and another completed computer-based activities at a level that was challenging for them.
- Most teachers, however, do not plan lessons adequately to meet the different needs of individual students. Teachers do not pay enough attention to students' prior knowledge, employment history and personal experiences. They do not allow students to use their prior learning to explore topics during lessons sufficiently and students therefore do not learn at a fast enough pace.
- Too much teaching is poor, particularly within programmes designed to prepare students for employment. Teachers plan learning at a pace that is too slow and without enough variety to provide interest and challenge to students and to enable them to make adequate progress. Many teachers lack the skills to inspire students to make the progress expected of them.
- Teachers do not make clear to students the intended outcomes of lessons, and students' own records of key learning points are not precise enough. Subsequently, students' recall of what they have learned is poor and they make insufficient progress towards the collection of evidence for their portfolios.
- Students benefit from good pastoral support, including advice on financial, transport and nutritional matters that enables them to overcome a wide range of personal difficulties. However, teachers' setting of academic targets lacks sufficient detail or a focus on specific and measurable targets. Teachers are too slow to follow up on students' poor attendance at the Tonbridge campus.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers do not make adequate use of ILT to make lessons more interesting for students. A small number of teachers use ILT well; for example, one teacher used a video clip to help students to understand difficult dance steps; but this practice is not widespread.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is weak and, as a result, students' written and practical work requires improvement. Teachers are poor at incorporating the development of students' literacy skills into lessons. Teachers' feedback to students on their work lacks detail, fails to correct spelling mistakes on many occasions and does not clearly indicate how they can make further improvements.
- Staff provide adequate information to students about the subjects offered and undertake appropriate assessments of their abilities to help place them on the course that best suits their needs. Students are provided with appropriate advice and guidance in relation to making choices about their next steps.
- Teachers do not include sufficient discussions about diversity in lessons and often miss opportunities to develop students' awareness of social and cultural issues further. Teachers and support staff provide appropriate assistance and adaptations for students so that all are able to participate in lessons. Students demonstrate good levels of empathy and support for their peers.

Accounting, finance and business management**16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected by the poor success rates, particularly on intermediate and advanced-level courses. Teachers focus too narrowly on the knowledge and skills required to pass assessments, and not enough on extending students' learning to achieve high grades and to prepare them for employment. Students' attendance is poor in a minority of lessons and too many leave courses without achieving their qualification.
- In the best lessons, teachers use their current industry knowledge well to motivate students and to link theory to employment practice. Teachers are enthusiastic and inspire confidence in students, who enjoy their learning.
- Teachers assess students' abilities well at the start of the course to ascertain their prior learning. However, in planning lessons, they do not make sufficient use of information held in class profiles and in students' individual learning plans. Teachers do not plan activities well enough to ensure that the least able keep up with the pace of learning, and that the most able are challenged and motivated to achieve high grades.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers manage group discussions poorly so that some students do not contribute and become disinterested. Teachers do not adequately use the experience of students who work in family businesses or those with part-time jobs to link business theory to its practical applications in the work place.
- Staff do not provide adequate information to students to help them select the course that best meets their needs. Consequently, the proportion of students who leave before the end of their course is high. Students who do complete their programme of study receive good support to help them achieve. Staff provide effective advice about the progression opportunities to higher-level courses, apprenticeships or employment. Advanced-level students applying for university receive timely and effective support to help them progress.
- Most teachers and students use technology well, including the college's VLE which provides a wide variety of up-to-date resources. Teachers set students regular homework and independent study tasks, but do not provide them with enough guidance so that they know exactly what is expected of them.
- Teachers provide detailed feedback on students' assignments that helps them to make the changes required to improve their work. However, teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to check learning during lessons. For example, teachers do not encourage students to develop a deeper understanding of the subject through self or peer evaluation activities.
- In most lessons, students develop good skills in English and mathematics through tasks related to their course work. However, teachers do not sufficiently reinforce students' learning of subject specific vocabulary, for example through the creation of glossaries. Students on administration courses develop good word processing skills with a focus on accurate spelling and grammar. Teachers train students well on advanced-level courses to make detailed notes.
- Teachers make ineffective use of the resources available for promoting awareness of equality and diversity themes. They do not routinely challenge students' views related to business or social issues when these are ill-considered and potentially offensive. However, teachers manage class behaviour well and establish an environment that is inclusive and free of bullying or discrimination.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- K College was formed in April 2010 through the merger of West Kent and South Kent Colleges. This presented significant financial and logistical challenges, but for the first two years steady progress was made in improving the quality of provision. However, from early 2012, leaders and governors began to receive financial updates that signified a rapidly worsening position. By the end of 2012, the college was in a state of poor financial health caused by a range of factors including, but not confined to, inept financial management and poor controls and risk assessment. At the time of this inspection, a competitive process was under way with bidders invited to submit tenders for taking over different parts of the provision and the college's assets.
- The current senior leadership team, in place since January 2013, has stabilised a potentially chaotic situation and sought to restore fragile staff morale, with some success. The interim Principal has focused, rightly, on preparing the college for transition to new ownership while at the same time doing everything possible to ensure that current students benefit from improved provision. The uncertainty over the college's future between 2012 and the anticipated conclusion of the tendering process in 2014, combined with the need to make significant cost savings, including staffing cuts, have made sustainable improvement difficult to secure. The quality of provision is not good enough, and in several significant areas too few students complete their courses successfully. Nevertheless, the vast majority of managers and teachers are determined to do everything they can to improve the college.
- Governors acknowledge their corporate responsibility for the financial failings, but became aware of the problems too late to intervene effectively. Their focus over the last 18 months has been on managing the financial crisis, although to their credit they have never lost sight of their duty to scrutinise students' success and the quality of provision. Governors regularly review aspects of students' performance. However, information supplied to them on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been ineffective in enabling them to develop a full understanding of the issues.
- Senior leaders have recently restructured curriculum management in response to the dual pressures of cutting costs and improving provision. Reporting lines are now shorter and managers with responsibility for each campus have improved the college's responsiveness to local issues around quality. However, efforts to improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not yet successful. Curriculum managers at all levels are yet to reach a shared understanding of how to raise standards. They devote too much of their time to more mundane operational matters, partly because many teachers do not yet take sufficient responsibility for their own, or their students' performance. Arrangements to assure the quality of work-based learning are undeveloped. Performance management is very weak and few formal appraisals were undertaken in the past year. A new system is being designed that will focus more on holding staff accountable for all aspects of their performance. Staff development to improve teaching and learning is limited both in scope and effectiveness.
- Quality assurance systems have not been effective in raising standards. Leaders are yet to establish a culture in which teachers and managers have the tools and the understanding to reflect on their performance and formulate plans for improvement. Many teachers, and some middle managers, struggle to analyse and use basic data on students' progress to review the success of their provision. College leaders recognise these weaknesses, but have yet to find a solution that is not over-bureaucratic and time-consuming.
- The college's draft self-assessment report is honest and largely accurate. College leaders are under no illusion about the scale of the task that staff face before all the provision is good or better. While leaders and managers understand fully the critical importance of improving teaching, arrangements for evaluating and improving current practice are not good enough. An over-reliance on periodic lesson observations reflects a failure to develop a culture for teachers of on-going self-reflective practice, and as a consequence, managers struggle to make sense of the relationship between teaching practice and students' achievements.

- In the context of the uncertainties facing the college, it has maintained a reasonably broad and balanced curriculum, with appropriate progression routes, that meets the needs of students and other stakeholders throughout the locations it serves. The college has maintained some effective partnership working despite the reputational damage caused by its financial plight, and makes a valued contribution to widening participation in education and training and promoting social inclusion. Ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve features prominently in the college's analysis of its performance, and if achievement gaps between different groups occur they are identified. However, teachers and managers are less adept in identifying and evaluating the contribution that they make to improving students' understanding of the diverse society in which they will work in the future.
- All of the campuses provide a safe and secure environment for students, and an atmosphere of tolerance and respect for others pervades the college. Formal arrangements for ensuring that students, particularly those who are vulnerable, are safe are good and meet legislative requirements fully.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

K 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	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	4	4	4	4
Outcomes for learners	4	4	4	4
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	4	4	4	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management	4	4	4	4

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Early years and playwork	3
Building and construction	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Foundation English	4
Independent living and leisure skills	4
Accounting and finance	3
Business management	3

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 4399							
	Part-time: 3751							
Principal/CEO	Mr Phil Frier (Interim)							
Date of previous inspection	December 2011							
Website address	www.kcollege.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	742	198	777	280	1239	821	18	301
Part-time	122	902	89	785	17	569	3	264
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+
	129	142	26	93	0	7		
Number of learners aged 14-16	96							
Full-time	3							
Part-time	83							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	190							
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"> ■ Construction Skills People ■ CXK ■ Eglantine Catering Limited ■ Hygiene Sue ■ IPS ■ JTJ ■ Liral Veget Training & Recruitment ■ Runway ■ Synergy Training South West ■ That Nail & Beauty Place ■ Train Plus Ltd ■ Upz & Downz 							

Contextual information

The college serves the population of a very wide area across south and west Kent, including Tonbridge and Malling, Shepway, Dover and Ashford local authorities. The proportion of pupils in Kent attaining five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English and mathematics is just above the south east and England averages. However, in Tonbridge it is above the average, while in Dover and Folkestone it is below the average. This difference is also evident in the unemployment rate, which is below the regional and national average in Tonbridge, equal to the national average in Folkestone and above the national average in Ashford and Dover. The proportion of the local population with level 2 and level 3 qualifications varies considerably in different areas. It is lowest in Dover and highest in Tonbridge, with the other areas close to national averages.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Rieks Drijver HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college. 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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