

# Palmer's College

## Sixth form college

Inspection dates		15–18 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
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:

- The proportion of students who achieve their qualification is around the national rate but too much variation exists between different subjects and different groups of students. On AS-level and advanced vocational courses, not enough students pass their courses.
- While students make good progress on many vocational courses, those studying academic courses do not make enough progress and too few are achieving high grades.
- Standards of teaching, learning and assessment vary too much and not enough is consistently good or better.
- College processes to improve the quality of teaching and learning through the performance management of teachers are insufficiently robust and as a result, have been ineffective.
- Not all students are developing their use of English and mathematics, as well as they could do.
- Leaders and managers have not maintained the college's previously outstanding standards and actions taken to improve have met with mixed success. While the pace of change has increased notably over the past year, and positive signs of improvement are emerging, it is too early to assess the impact of many initiatives.
- The governing body has not questioned senior leaders sufficiently about the reasons for the overall decline in the college's educational performance in the past few years.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- A high and improving proportion of students on A-level and intermediate level programmes achieve their qualifications.
- Students gain a good range of personal and social skills that prepare them well for future employment or their next steps in education.
- Students enjoy college and their behaviour throughout all areas of the college is very good.
- Support for students who require additional help in their studies is good and they achieve well.
- A good range of additional trips and activities enrich students' experience and raise aspirations.
- The college's well-maintained accommodation provides a positive place for students to learn.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so it is consistently good or better and so that all students make at least good progress in lessons. Ensure all teachers use initial assessment information to plan and implement activities that are interesting and challenging for all students. Additionally, ensure teachers routinely reinforce and develop students' mathematical and English skills and use questioning more effectively to extend and deepen students' knowledge and skills.
- Ensure all teachers set sufficiently ambitious targets for students and monitor the progress towards these closely and frequently. Support all groups of students, particularly those on academic courses and White British male students, to achieve their qualifications successfully and make good or better progress.
- With immediate effect, ensure managers improve the teaching, learning and assessment in science to reverse the notable decline in student outcomes to ensure students across all science courses are achieving well and making good progress.
- Simplify, strengthen and implement robust performance management arrangements at all levels, in order to increase accountability and drive improvement. Ensure managers and staff are set clear, specific and measurable targets that rapidly improve the areas for which they are responsible. Monitor performance against these targets frequently and hold managers and staff to account for any underperformance.
- Strengthen the college's teaching and learning observation process to ensure managers have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. Make sure all observers focus sharply on learning and progress when forming judgments and when drawing up subsequent action plans for teachers. Additionally, clarify links between lesson observations, annual appraisal, staff training and the college's core and curriculum reviews.
- Improve the governing body's scrutiny of academic performance. Ensure governors review more closely the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the impact of management actions and key trends in students' outcomes over time. Provide governors with reports that focus on key indicators of success, such as student-related progress measures, so they may ask more probing questions of senior leaders and hold them better to account.
- Improve the effectiveness of quality assurance and self-assessment to speed up the rate of improvement. Targets in actions plans should be clearly prioritised, measurable and focus more closely on the impact for students. Managers must scrutinise the effectiveness of these plans carefully and frequently.

### Inspection judgements

#### Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of students who achieve their main qualifications has declined since the previous inspection and is now broadly in line with that of similar colleges. Most students studying A-level programmes and intermediate vocational programmes are successful in gaining their qualification and this has been an improving trend over the past three years. However, not enough students studying AS-level and vocational advanced programmes pass their qualification.
- In the majority of cases, students studying vocational qualifications are making good progress, with a marked improving trend of students achieving merit or distinction grades. For the last two years however, the progress made by many students on academic programmes has been

insufficient. As a result, students on these programmes are not always achieving the higher grades they are capable of, particularly on AS-level courses.

- Performance between subjects and across college faculties varies too much. For example, students achieve consistently well in some subjects, such as AS-level and A-level accounting but in other subjects, such as AS-level and A-level mathematics trends in success rates are erratic. Additionally, in a minority of subjects, such as AS-level sciences, performance has been historically poor against all indicators.
- The quality of most students' work is at least in line with awarding body expectations. In subjects such as film studies, graphic design, accounting and intermediate business, the standard of students' work is particularly high.
- While several gaps in achievement between different groups of students narrowed in 2012/13, not all groups of students do as well as they could. For example, while students who declare a learning difficulty and/or disability now achieve in line with their peers. Male students of White British heritage perform less well when compared to most other groups, including White British female students. Students who receive additional support and the small number of care leavers achieve well.
- Students enjoy their time at college. The majority of students are punctual and arrive at lessons keen to learn. This positive attitude to learning contributes to the progress made in developing a good range of personal and social skills, team working skills, discussion and listening skills. Consequently, many students articulate their views and aspirations clearly and with confidence.
- Throughout their courses, most students develop the skills and attributes they need for employment or their next steps in education. In a number of subjects, including visual arts, media, English and law, students gain a good grasp of subject-specific terminology, which they apply with self-assurance. For those students who take or resit GCSE mathematics or English alongside their main programme of study, too few pass with grades at A to C.
- A high and increasing number of students who successfully complete intermediate-level courses move onto advanced-level courses. The proportion of students progressing from AS-level to A-level subjects, while improved significantly, is not yet good. In the past year, managers have markedly strengthened the collection and analysis of destination data. On leaving Palmer's, most students progress into high education or employment. In 2012/13 however, just under half of advanced-level students progressed directly to higher education.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Requires improvement

- The standard of teaching, learning, and assessment varies in quality from the very good to the uninspiring, and accurately reflects the variability in student outcomes across the college. While the majority of lessons observed were good, too many teachers plan ineffectively for the wide range of student ability, resulting in lessons where some students become uninterested while others struggle to keep up. Student surveys, while positive about many aspects of the student experience, are critical of lessons that lack interest and challenge.
- In the better lessons, teachers ensure that students work hard to grasp theoretical concepts and develop a deeper understanding of their chosen subject. Teachers structure these lessons well to ensure all students make good progress by providing them with a wide range of purposeful activities.
- In an effective AS-level law lesson on how to interpret statutes, the teacher put students in groups to explore case studies. The teacher carefully structured the lesson to ensure the case studies varied in complexity so that some students could build their understanding steadily, while others, who grasped the concept quickly, could extend their knowledge further. Students made good progress and their comprehension of the associated legal terminology improved.

- Where lessons promote learning less successfully, teachers tend to talk for long periods without checking what students have learnt. Too often teachers do not use the information they have about what students already know and can do to design activities that will challenge and interest students sufficiently. As a result, the progress in these lessons is restricted.
- Many teachers make appropriate use of information learning technologies (ILT) to support students' learning. However, while good in some subjects such as music technology and English, the imaginative use of technologies is not yet widespread. Most curriculum areas are beginning to use the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) to better support and enhance learning.
- The college's self-assessment report identifies accurately that assessment to support learning on many courses requires further improvement. Most teachers return students' work promptly and provide good verbal feedback to students on how to improve. The quality of written feedback in a minority of subjects lacks detail and therefore is less helpful to students.
- Target setting to encourage students to aim for and achieve higher grades is not always successful and the tracking and recording of students' progress by teachers is underdeveloped. The college has recently introduced an electronic action planning system to better monitor progress, but it is too soon to judge its positive impact on target setting or achievement.
- While the range of enrichment is not extensive in all areas of the college, many teachers use it well to extend learning and raise students' aspirations. For example, in an AS-level theatre studies session a local theatre group manager runs a range of workshops to build students' skills including those of confidence projection and characterisation techniques. A good range of additional activities and trips enriches students' experience and often initiates their assignment work.
- Teachers' development and promotion of students' English and mathematics skills within lessons is uneven across the college. Managers have introduced a wide range of practical initiatives this year, such as additional workshops to support students' literacy and mathematical skills. Each subject area has a glossary of terms to extend and reinforce students' knowledge of technical language; teachers use them well in some subjects, such as law, but their use in other subjects is less effective.
- Transition arrangements from school to college and from college into employment and higher education are good. Students benefit from, and value, a comprehensive range of additional help including specialist, pastoral and counselling support. Assistance with personal statements for university applications is good. Students develop the skills they will need for future employment very effectively through targeted work experience, volunteering and charity work.
- Teachers use teaching materials effectively to further develop harmonious relationships, and in some instances are skilful in increasing and expanding students' awareness of prejudice. For example in one lesson, students explored the marginalised role of women in medieval politics and the historical recording and treatment of their contribution. However, not all teachers are confident and able to plan lessons that successfully raise students' awareness of equality and diversity themes.

## Science

### 16-19 study programmes

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment within science is inadequate and correlates closely to low outcomes for students. The outcomes for science students have declined over the last three years to be significantly below those of similar colleges for AS-level subjects and for advanced applied science vocational courses. The progress made by students is below that expected when taking into account their prior attainment and too few students progress from AS-level to A-level subjects.

- Teachers do not take enough account of what students already know or can do to plan activities and consideration of students' prior abilities in English and mathematics is limited. Consequently, the pace of learning is often too slow and many students struggle to maintain interest because work set by their teacher is either too easy or too difficult. Teachers do not check often enough if students understand what they have learnt or use questioning techniques sufficiently to broaden students' skills and knowledge.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their skills and expertise to plan and teach so that students of all abilities are interested in the topic and make rapid progress. For example, in a biology lesson, the teacher used mind-mapping techniques and a variety of learning resources to ensure students had a good understanding of the processes of gaseous exchange. The teacher referred to everyday examples, which made the learning more relevant to the students and effectively reinforced their knowledge.
- In an effective chemistry lesson, the teacher posed questions to individual students, ensuring they had enough time to reflect before giving a response. The students demonstrated a good understanding of the processes of water crystallisation. The teacher structured the lesson well, allowing students to practise and consolidate their knowledge of key scientific concepts.
- In many cases, teachers did not develop students' practical skills sufficiently. For example, students do not always use basic equipment, such as burettes, correctly. In a few lessons, teachers did not reinforce firmly good health and safety practice. Too often, students do not fully understand the underpinning scientific principles of the topics they are investigating in the laboratory.
- The quality of teachers' marking is far too variable. Students do benefit from detailed verbal explanations of where they have gone wrong, but teachers give insufficient written feedback on how they might improve. In many cases, teachers' assessment of work focuses too much on meeting awarding body criteria rather than developing and extending students' wider knowledge and skills.
- While teachers set each student a minimum target grade and a grade to which they can aspire, they do not always give students specific, subject-based targets and guidance to help them achieve the higher grades. Students benefit from the significant amount of time in science workshops and during lunchtime in which teachers help them to understand difficult concepts.
- In most lessons, teachers reinforce the correct use of scientific terminology, although the further development of students' English and mathematical skills is seldom incorporated routinely. Students identified as being in need of additional support for these skills attend related workshops, but teachers do not sufficiently challenge or support students to improve their study habits or their literacy skills.
- Equality and diversity themes are included explicitly in the college tutorial programme. However, teachers do not always raise them within lessons when the opportunity arises.

## Visual arts and media

### 16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment in visual arts and media require improvement, which reflects the uneven outcomes in this area. While many courses have success rates at the national average, too many students achieve grades below expectation, or do not pass their course. The college has recently identified initiatives to raise achievement for all students but they have yet to be fully effective. In graphic design, photography, film studies and intermediate-level media production, students achieve well.
- In the better lessons, students make rapid progress because teachers plan work to enthuse them in activities exceeding the requirements of the awarding body marking scheme. Tasks and

projects are ambitious and students develop inventive and challenging ideas. Students are confident in their knowledge and use good technical skills to develop their ideas further.

- In too many lessons, teachers spend too much time reinforcing theory and knowledge from previous lessons. In three-dimensional design, students lack sufficient digital skills and in art, students do not draw enough from observation in order to support the achievement of higher grades. Students are not always confident enough in their knowledge to use their technical skills to develop their ideas further. In subjects where teachers develop theory alongside practical skills, most students achieve high standards.
- Teachers' verbal feedback to students is constructive and timely. Not all written feedback, however, gives detailed advice to enable students to develop their work and improve their grades. The best examples of written feedback clearly explain the links between theory, conceptual thinking and practical skills, so that students can apply this to their work.
- Students benefit from the use of a wide array of technical equipment and specialist resources to produce and enhance their work including three dimensional workshops, audio and film editing suites and high quality large format digital printing. Many film and media students become highly skilled in production and post-production techniques. Design students demonstrate detailed understanding of typography and layout.
- Computers in design studios are easily accessible and students use them well to research and support their work. Classrooms are well appointed and student work is widely displayed in studios and corridors to inspire learning.
- Teachers arrange many activities for students to enrich their education. Students visit national and international museums, galleries and cultural centres to extend their learning. Visitors from industry and universities frequently speak about professional opportunities and higher education. The college hosts the Thurrock film festival and photography students recently won awards in a competition sponsored by the Royal Opera House.
- Teachers' detailed tracking of students' progress has been underdeveloped over recent years. Teachers and managers are beginning to share information about students to enable prompt interventions to keep students on track. Managers have only very recently strengthened the monitoring of students' targets and it is far too early to judge the full impact of this on improving the overall progress students make. Initial induction and transition projects between years support and prepare students well for life at college.
- Teachers use appropriate opportunities to reinforce students' English and mathematics skills. For example, in drawing and making activities, students are able to calculate scales, ratios and proportion. In film and media, students are able to solve time-based problems efficiently. In most lessons, teachers use questions and discussion well to develop the communication and interpersonal abilities of students. Analytical and evaluative annotation in sketchbooks and journals and the preparation of scripts and essays foster students' effective writing skills.
- All courses promote a diverse range of cultural and creative influences and assignments routinely expect students to explore ideas and develop their work within broad historical and cultural contexts. For example, in a media studies lesson the teacher directed students to an article in a New York publication analysing the stereotyping of race as portrayed in the film *Django Unchained*. In addition, photography students commented on the aspirations of social classes through photographs of front doors taken on location in London's Brick Lane.



**English and modern foreign languages****16-19 study programmes**

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning require improvement and this correlates closely to outcomes in the area. Too many GCSE English students have failed to gain their target of a C grade and although most AS-level and A-level students pass their exams, their grades have been lower than expected given their starting points. Managers have introduced new measures to tackle these weaknesses, including a switch to IGCSE, but it is too early to tell how effectively they are working.
- In the best lessons, teachers relate work clearly to the examination and plan skilfully to interest and challenge students. In an A-level English language lesson, groups of students enjoyed taking responsibility for planning, researching and writing the different paragraphs of an essay on children's language to provide a model answer. French students worked in pairs to plan a presentation on nuclear energy, enjoying broadening general knowledge alongside language skills.
- Too many IGCSE lessons are insufficiently interesting, challenging or purposeful. Teachers do not always make clear the aim of the lesson, the purpose of tasks and/or what skills students are expected to learn. This results in students losing enthusiasm and reduces the progress they make.
- While the atmosphere in lessons is supportive, A-level teachers do not provide enough challenge for students to think independently. For example, they develop answers themselves rather than probing further, and miss opportunities to put students in charge of researching new work.
- A-level teaching teams have developed new, interesting programmes with good resources including revision guides and on-line support to extend learning outside the classroom, including a social networking page. They use video, the language laboratory and information technology imaginatively to bring lessons to life.
- Teamwork is a positive and common feature amongst both staff and students. English students gain valuable study skills that they can apply to their other subjects. Languages students speak with confidence and fluency, are passionate about their learning and, unusually, love grammar. For example, AS-level French and German students spent their lunch period working with gifted A-level colleagues who took them, amid much laughter, through the conjugation of irregular verbs.
- Teachers did not respond swiftly to students who were at risk of underperforming in 2012/13 and therefore many students were surprised at their low grades. A more thorough approach this year means most students know how they are doing, but it is far too soon to judge if current students will stay on track. A useful induction programme prepares students for AS-level study and helps to identify starting points and learning goals.
- Marking is mostly detailed and constructive. New feedback sheets link students' performance to examination criteria, so they can see where they are and where they should go next. Students have good support with planning their next steps, and increasing numbers are gaining university places to study related subjects.
- Teachers pay good attention to improving students' writing skills. They have chosen the IGCSE course because it allows a greater focus on improving literacy. Starter activities in A-level English lessons cover a range of areas from punctuation to paragraphing. Vocabulary building is a key feature of language lessons, and in the best English sessions, students develop the technical language they need to discuss linguistic or literary concepts.
- Good enrichment opportunities include trips abroad, theatre and study visits and competitions. Five students are due to have work published, having won a young writers' competition. A trip

to Normandy at the start of the French course developed students' cultural understanding and encouraged a strong ethos of mutual support and enjoyment.

- Equality is promoted well and teachers support students to develop their own views. IGCSE English students, through work on the holocaust, develop a wider understanding of discrimination. A video led to good discussion in Spanish about stereotyping, sexism and ageism. Teachers select texts in English covering themes such as gender, race and sexual orientation.

## Business management and accounting

### 16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching learning and assessment require improvement; the majority of business students do not make good enough progress in lessons. This reflects the wide variability in outcomes on advanced business programmes, with not enough students passing their courses or achieving high grades. In contrast, much teaching and learning is good on accounting courses and on the business intermediate course. Historically in these subjects, a high number of students gain their qualifications and make good progress.
- Students enjoy their studies, have positive attitudes to learning and work well in lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and have sound subject knowledge. In too many lessons however, the pace of learning is not quick enough and teachers spend too long going over work already learned, or explaining the task ahead. Consequently, while teachers spend time consolidating learning, they give too little time to extending learning or allowing time for students to work independently.
- Teachers do not always use the information about what students already know or can do well enough in the planning of activities, so that work matches students' specific capabilities. For example, in the weaker lessons, less able students can struggle to keep up with the pace of the lesson and students of higher ability find the work too easy.
- Teachers use of questioning is not always sufficiently well planned and precise to involve all students in learning. They do not use enough directed or open questions to encourage students to discuss questions together and develop their thinking skills.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is accurate and provides them with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve further. Teachers pay close attention to correcting students' spelling and punctuation and improving the layout and structure of written work. Students, however, are not given enough opportunities to mark their own work. Very well-designed accounting workbooks have a wide range of exercises and activities that effectively develop students' knowledge and application of accounting principles.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers plan activities that extend students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers ask searching questions that get students thinking about, and recognising, how much they have learnt. For example, in an A-level business lesson the teacher asked probing questions to challenge students to explain their understanding of how to market a product. As a result, students made good progress in identifying the main features of a marketing plan.
- Students develop their understanding of business concepts appropriately, for example, by completing exercises at the end of topics to reinforce knowledge and understanding. Effective use is made of accounting exercises at the start of students' studies to assess their mathematical skills. Students however, do not have enough extended writing opportunities to develop higher-level analytical and evaluative skills.
- BTEC business students receive appropriate individual subject support in the recently introduced lunchtime workshops. A-level accounting and business students are provided with useful revision workshops over Easter to develop their study skills technique and help them prepare for



examinations. Initial advice and guidance ensures that students are on the correct courses. Students benefit from the taster sessions at induction that help them make appropriate course choices. Increasing numbers of students are progressing into higher education, training and employment.

- Students have a practical working knowledge of equality and diversity. For example, in a BTEC business lesson the teacher made sure students avoided negative language associated with consumer products sold in more disadvantaged areas. As a result, students used constructive language in their writing and during the classroom discussion.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Managers have not been successful in maintaining the very high standards reported at the previous inspection. Outcomes for students and the quality of teaching and learning are now too variable. Until recently, senior leaders and governors have been too slow to take action to bring about rapid improvement and to respond to the needs of the changing student population. In the past year, a more realistic self-assessment and a sharper focus on quality improvement are beginning to bring about gradual but sustainable improvements.
- The governing body receive detailed reports from managers that they review frequently. Governors however, have not provided enough challenge for senior leaders or held them sufficiently to account where academic performance has remained static or declined. They acknowledge in their self-assessment that they have not paid enough attention to improving teaching, learning and assessment. The monitoring of college finances is good.
- Managers' actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment through performance management are insufficiently rigorous. Systems are over-complex and links between the performance of individual teachers evaluated through lesson observation, annual professional reviews and curriculum area reviews are not sufficiently clear to enable precise action planning. In 2012/13, around a third of teachers did not undergo professional review.
- The lesson observation system does not provide sufficiently robust judgements about teaching, learning and assessment to bring about swift improvement. College observers do not always focus enough on what students are learning or on the pace of progress made. Where observers do focus sharply on learning, this provides a clear agenda for individual staff to improve their teaching practice. Several observers do not provide sufficiently specific feedback to guide action that will target improvement.
- Staff professional development is well managed and supported by the recent introduction of learning mentors and accessible resources but it is too early to judge the full impact of these measures.
- Recent restructuring at senior management level has strengthened significantly the focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, self-assessment at subject level does not always identify clearly the key strengths and areas for improvement. Targets are not precise enough to enable effective action planning and monitoring. Managers' reviews of underperforming areas have started to bring about improvement, for example in AS-level and A-level law and accounting. However, other areas such as science have not improved.
- The self-assessment report for 2012/13 is much sharper than that of the previous year and identifies clearly strengths and weaknesses. The judgements are broadly in line with those of inspectors. Managers seek students' views through a variety of formal and informal means and use this feedback effectively to improve students' educational experience. For example, they extended the library opening hours, enabling students to study after classes, a particular benefit to those who are unable to work at home.
- The college offers a good range of academic and vocational courses in most curriculum areas. Progression from intermediate to advanced level courses is good. New approaches to developing

students' English and mathematical skills are not yet working effectively across all areas of the college. Managers recognise that they need to align personal study programmes more closely to match students' prior attainment and review more carefully the breadth of each student's individual programme.

- Senior leaders have extended the college's external links, which has brought about a number of partnerships that benefit students including the local planning forum. Managers work closely with further education colleges and schools to provide a complementary curriculum offer. The college uses its well-established links with employers to organise voluntary placements, for example in hospitals and schools for students on A-level courses as well as work experience where this is a requirement of the course.
- The college provides a harmonious and respectful environment for learning. Leaders and managers promote a reasonable range of wider equality and diversity themes, such as mental health through the tutorial programme. Attractive displays reflect the increasingly diverse student community, and promote a culture of inclusion. While managers have successfully closed the achievement gap between several groups of students, the gap for other groups, such as White British males, remains too wide.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. Managers record incidents clearly and follow these up well, often working with local specialist agencies. Bullying and harassment are rare and managers deal promptly and effectively with any incidents. In a few cases, teachers do not sufficiently reinforce professional standards in lessons.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Palmer's College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Science</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Media and communication</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Modern foreign languages</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Business management</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Accounting and finance</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Type of provider</b>	Sixth form college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 2,147
	Part-time: 4
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mark Vinall
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	May 2007
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.palmers.ac.uk">www.palmers.ac.uk</a>

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	13	N/A	113	N/A	1,976	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	1							
Full-time	1							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
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"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Palmer's is a medium sized sixth form college located in Grays, Thurrock. Around a third of students enrolled are from outside the local authority. The college predominantly offers A-level and GCSE programmes. Almost half of provision is now vocational programmes at either intermediate or advanced level.

Areas of intense deprivation remain within the borough and few families in Thurrock have experience of further or higher education. The proportion of school leavers who attain five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is broadly in line with the national average but varies by notably by school, from significantly below to well above average. Approximately a sixth of students who declare a learning difficulty and/or disability and a quarter of the total student cohort are of minority ethnic heritage.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI
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Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the assistant principal teaching, learning and quality improvement 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 these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions and assessments. 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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