

Berkshire College of Agriculture

Specialist college

Inspection dates		4–7 March 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Recent positive changes designed to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not been in place long enough to bring about sufficient improvement. As a consequence, outcomes for learners have not yet improved to a high enough standard.
- Too few students achieve the qualifications for which they enrol.
- Not enough lessons, especially those for theory subjects, are good or outstanding. Students and apprentices do not make sufficient or consistent enough progress towards achieving their qualifications.
- The standard of teachers' assessment of students' work, both in lessons and in assignments, is inconsistent. Assessment is not always effective in enabling students to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Students do not make sufficient progress in improving their skills in English and mathematics. Too few students complete GCSE English and mathematics qualifications when it would be appropriate for them to do so, and not enough teachers develop these skills in subject lessons.
- Self-assessment is not sufficiently self-critical or accurate to bring about improvement quickly enough.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Students develop very good practical and employability skills.
- Students receive very good care, guidance and support to help them achieve their qualifications and to overcome significant personal challenges to learning.
- Students feel very safe at the college. They enjoy the time on their courses and value the positive and harmonious atmosphere and the surroundings.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications by continuing to develop the effectiveness of initial advice and guidance, to ensure all students are enrolled on a suitable programme of study which fully meets their needs.
- Establish a rigorous target-setting and monitoring process which sets challenging targets for students, taking into account their ability and potential. Regularly review the progress of students and apprentices to ensure they are achieving their targets, and implement improvement actions where students are underperforming. Implement actions to reduce underachievement by particular groups.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by ensuring that feedback from lesson observations focuses on the progress students are making in lessons. Provide teachers with training to help them plan lessons which enable all students to make the progress of which they are capable, both in lessons and in their qualifications.
- Provide further opportunities for all students to improve their English and mathematical skills as part of their study programme. Ensure that all students who do not have GCSE English or mathematics at grade C or above have the opportunity to achieve these when it would be appropriate for them to do so. Develop teachers' expertise so that teachers can maximise all available opportunities to develop students' English and mathematical skills in subject lessons.
- Improve the performance of apprentices by ensuring that realistic targets for achievement are agreed and that they receive regular and timely reviews of their progress which clearly inform them of what they have to do to improve prior to the next review. Ensure managers regularly monitor the progress which apprentices are making and take appropriate steps when progress slows.
- Improve the accuracy and effectiveness of self-assessment and quality improvement. Accurately identify the college's strengths and areas for improvement, setting specific and measurable actions for improvement where required. Ensure that staff complete the actions agreed within challenging timescales to improve the pace of improvement.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for learners require improvement, as too few learners successfully complete their courses. Students studying level 1 courses achieve their qualifications at a rate above that for similar colleges nationally. However, students on courses at levels 2 and 3 achieve at a rate significantly lower than the national rate. Achievements of students on AS-level courses are well below the national rate. ▪ The proportion of students who left their courses early was particularly high in 2012/13 but it has declined in 2013/14, as students received more detailed information at recruitment, and managers and teachers implemented new monitoring procedures. Most students are now achieving better progress as a result of making more informed choices. ▪ Students are most successful in achieving their qualifications in animal care, public services and preparation for work; those in other subject areas, such as sport, hairdressing and beauty therapy and health and social care, achieve their qualifications at a rate equal to, or slightly lower than, the national average. Students studying courses in work-related subjects, such as animal care, horticulture and horse management, develop excellent practical skills to high industry standards. ▪ Managers have identified some groups of students who underachieve compared to their peers, but strategies to close these gaps in achievement have not been in place long enough to judge 	

their effectiveness. Male students achieve their qualifications at a higher rate than their female peers. Students who have a declared learning difficulty or disability achieve their qualifications at a rate significantly higher than those who do not declare a disability or difficulty. Students aged over 19 achieve their qualifications at a rate lower than their 16- to 18-year-old peers and have done so for the past three years.

- Too few students who have not yet achieved a GCSE grade A* to C in English or mathematics make sufficient progress in gaining these qualifications. Too many students do not retake GCSEs when this would be the most appropriate qualification to support their progression to further training, employment or higher education.
- Students develop good personal and social skills whilst at college. They behave well, respect each other and their environment. Students' attendance at lessons is satisfactory and has improved in 2013/14 in every subject except foundation English, mathematics and motor vehicle studies.
- Teachers have high aspirations for their students. They use their excellent industrial knowledge and experience to enhance students' learning, but they do not all use this experience to provide accurate, timely and good careers advice and guidance.
- The vast majority of students complete a work experience placement as part of their course, during which they develop their practical skills further in new and often challenging settings, such as hospitals and animal rescue centres. Although many apprentices make good progress at work, college trainers do not carry out work-based assessments often enough and the apprentices there are often unaware of their progress towards their qualifications.
- A high proportion of students who successfully complete their courses progress to further education, higher education or employment. However, managers do not collect and analyse information on the destinations of students who leave their course early.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers plan lessons thoughtfully and use their good practical and vocational experience well, so that students acquire good skills in their chosen vocations. Teachers' enthusiasm and concern for their students help students enjoy their courses and this leads to the large majority of students succeeding on their courses. Teachers are well prepared and, in the majority of subject areas, they ensure that students have the right equipment and tools to participate productively and learn from their practical activities. For example, floristry students benefit from teachers' insights and local knowledge about where to acquire the best materials at the right time.
- In classroom-based lessons, the impact of teachers' careful attention to detail is often lost, because teachers do not manage the different phases of their lessons with sufficient foresight and self-discipline. For example, explanations and introductions to activities can take too long; as a result, students lose interest or become bored because they are unable to get on with the task in hand and there is not enough time to complete their activities.
- Students enjoy, and make good progress in, the practical aspects of their courses. For example, motor vehicle students enjoy the excitement of working in modern, well-equipped workshops and on highly prestigious marques; however, some motor vehicle theory lessons are less inspiring. In the main, teachers manage the behaviour of students effectively and through supportive praise and encouragement help many students to succeed who may previously have found it difficult to do so.
- On a one-to-one basis, teachers are highly effective at helping students to make progress, but the ability and confidence of some teachers to manage group work and group discussions are less effective. Too frequently, teachers direct poorly-worded questions to the whole class, do not give students enough time to reflect and answer the questions themselves, or select the same students to answer. This does not enable teachers to assess the understanding of the group or of more reserved or reticent students, undermining the college's clear commitment to providing equality of opportunity to all.

- A distinct and positive feature of the majority of lessons is that teachers recap on previous learning at the start of lessons, making a positive start. However, they do not always give clear and understandable instructions on what they require of students, and this lack of clarity leads to students not using their time productively or repeating questions before they get started.
- The effectiveness of teachers’ assessment varies too much across the different subject areas of the college. Although they provide supportive and encouraging feedback on written work, teachers do not always give students insightful and precise instructions on how to improve. Students’ work is moderated to the appropriate standard. However, apprentices do not receive feedback and assessment frequently enough, or with enough employer involvement, to enable them to progress more quickly.
- Teachers assess the learning needs of students appropriately at the start of their programmes of study, but they do not fully explain the different components students must follow. Although staff set clear and helpful targets for each student, this year these have not been rigorously recorded, and staff do not review them regularly enough, making it difficult to assess students’ progress accurately.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance from staff before they start their courses. During their programmes of study, general guidance is very helpful. However, they do not always receive more detailed and specific guidance from teachers to help them to make suitable choices for progression from the college; although recent improvements have been made to improve students’ knowledge.
- The teaching of functional skills in English and mathematics, as part of students’ programmes of study, requires improvement. Some teaching of functional skills in mathematics is repetitive; students persevere because they know the importance of the subject, but they lack enthusiasm. Not all teachers pay sufficient attention and care to the correction and understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The care and support students receive are excellent. Staff provide a well-used range of practical and specialist services, such as help for well-being and health, finance and transport, as well as links to external agencies that provide specialist advice. Specialist learning coaches provide very effective help for students who have specific learning needs.
- The environment at the college is harmonious. Students are very respectful of each other and work well together. Managers promote understanding of diversity well, and staff in some subject areas promote this well in their teaching. However, not enough teachers have sufficient confidence to make use of opportunities to develop students’ appreciation of equality and diversity. For example, few staff used International Women’s Day, promoted visibly and centrally in the college, as a means to complement teaching in their subjects.

Health and social care, early years and playwork

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The proportion of students on health and social care and early years courses who achieve their qualifications is lower than the national rate. However, current students are now making satisfactory progress, and in some cases good progress. Teachers’ effective monitoring of students’ progress and good support have resulted in more students remaining on their course.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much, and too many lessons do not enable students to make the progress of which they are capable. In good lessons, teachers plan stimulating and challenging activities, using real workplace examples to illustrate points, and students find these lessons more interesting, and consequently make better progress.

- In a health and social care lesson, for example, exploration of the ageing process caught the imagination of students who responded confidently; they shared their experiences gained in the workplace, relating the social disengagement theory to actual experiences and therefore reinforcing their understanding. In an early years lesson, the students understood the importance of risk assessment when planning play activities as a result of carrying out realistic workplace tasks.
- Where teaching and learning are more effective, teachers pose stimulating questions that promote purposeful discussion, for example about the importance of behaviour management techniques in working with young children.
- However, too frequently, teachers do not plan learning in sufficient detail. They do not make their objectives clear to students at the beginning of lessons and do not check learning at the end, with the result that students' progress is not effectively measured. Superficial questioning of students' understanding does not challenge students to think, and too frequently teachers answer their own questions before allowing students to answer. Planned activities on level 3 courses are sometimes too complex and not well explained, resulting in students spending time seeking clarification and not using their time productively. Teachers do not pay enough attention to developing or improving English and mathematical skills.
- Students behave well in class. They are interested in their work, and many are confident to speak out and share opinions and examples from their work placements. In some classes teachers do not always encourage the more reticent students to contribute their ideas, and do not have other strategies to check their understanding. Teachers do not always manage inattentive students well enough.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Although teachers mark work and return this to students within the published guidelines, they do not ensure health and social care students submit work on time. As a result, some students have a backlog of work. Teachers' written feedback is encouraging, but often too general; in some cases it is insufficiently detailed and does not help students to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Students are confident about the skills they are developing. They are able to use what they learn in college in the workplace. For example, health and social care students are able to take blood pressure, pulse and temperatures, and early years students have had experience of planning play activities and preparing practical materials, linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, for sessions in their workplaces. Students develop their speaking and listening skills, as they understand the importance of being able to communicate effectively with different client groups.
- Students on full-time programmes receive good support from tutors. Regular and helpful tutorials help students set their own targets. In tutorials, tutors skilfully question less confident students. Where personal issues prevent attendance, tutors agree realistic targets with students as the first stage of coaxing them back into a work placement. Learning coaches provide good additional in-class support; they discreetly and effectively provide help where needed. However, newly-introduced apprentices on early years courses do not receive appropriate support. Progress reviews do not take place on time and apprentices are behind with the completion of their work.
- A comprehensive work experience programme enables students to experience the world of work in a variety of settings. Teachers maximise the use of industry contacts and arrange an exciting range of guest speakers and visits. A recent visit to the Guy's Hospital museum inspired students to consider hospital placements, and enabled them to appreciate the advances made in anaesthetic and infection control. Health and social care students are gaining timely access to hospitals, maternity wards and speech therapy units for work experience. Wearing the new student uniforms instils a more professional and confident demeanour and attitude.
- Promotion of diversity is an integral part of the health and social care curriculum, and where the subject naturally occurs, teachers handle it well. Students treat each other with respect in the classroom, and teachers make sure that male students, who are in the minority, are fully integrated and included.

Public services**16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The proportion of students who achieve their qualifications significantly improved in 2012/13, and students are now making good progress towards their learning goals. The proportion of students who leave their course early for the current academic year is very low.
- Students are enthusiastic about their programmes of study and their attendance is good. In the most effective lessons, teachers set a brisk pace of learning supported by a culture of trust and accountability. They effectively prepare students for future careers in the uniformed services, improve their understanding of the industry, and enable the most to make good progress. For example, students develop good written and oral presentation skills through researching a range of public services careers, or through developing their understanding of difficult psychological concepts. However, in the minority of less effective lessons, teachers do not support the development of students' independence sufficiently well, by enabling students to manage their own learning activities.
- Teachers are well qualified, with many years of experience in a broad range of uniformed services, which they use well to inspire students. They frequently provide an insight into service life that helps students to make well-informed and successful choices about progression to further study or employment within all branches of the uniformed services.
- Students have access to good facilities, including a fitness centre and high ropes facility, which teachers use effectively to provide students with a broad range of practical skills. Teachers' excellent links with local organisations, such as the army and fire brigade, enable students to make use of valuable learning opportunities, such as the Army Insight Programme, and realistic major incident scenarios, which effectively prepare them for future service careers.
- A few teachers make good use of video clips to develop students' understanding of technical terms and concepts, such as psychological terms. However, too many teachers make insufficient use of the interactive technologies available to them to develop the independence of learning that will enable students to fulfil their potential. The virtual learning environment (VLE) does not provide students with sufficient opportunities to help them take more responsibility for their learning.
- Teachers promptly identify those students who need extra help and provide effective support in the classroom and through drop-in sessions. However, some students do not make enough use of the latter and therefore their progress slows. Support for students with additional learning needs includes the provision of a learning coach for level 2 students, who is highly effective in helping students to make good progress.
- Informal personal support by staff is very effective and valued by the students. However, tutors do not record the impact of this support well enough to ensure that they promptly address poor progress, attendance and performance and set targets for improvement. However, when tutors identify under performance they seek further opportunities to help students progress, such as the Army Insight Programme. Target setting provides students with appropriate short-term targets for assessment completion. However, formal tutorials are not sufficiently rigorous; tutors do not effectively record information from these and students do not have specific targets that challenge them to reach the highest levels of performance.
- Students develop valuable employability skills, such as self-confidence and oral presentation skills, through teachers' good use of a range of assessment methods. Teachers' feedback on most students' work is insufficiently detailed and, in too many cases, lacks specific targets, particularly in respect of how to achieve high grades.

- Assessment and guidance before students start their programmes, including taster days and trials, ensure that staff enrol students on the most appropriate study programme for their learning needs and aspirations. Teachers' correction of English, particularly within assessment feedback, is frequently not consistent or sufficiently detailed to ensure that students improve their English.
- Teachers work effectively to ensure equality of opportunity by meeting the individual learning and personal needs of students and ensuring there is no bullying. Their promotion of cultural diversity in lessons is poor, with little formal planning for understanding or celebration.

Horticulture and floristry

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment in horticulture and floristry require improvement. Too few apprentices make good progress and gain their qualifications. For college-based students, teaching, learning and assessment are good and students make good progress. Teachers plan and structure lessons well, and students develop a wide range of practical skills that prepares them well for employment.
- Teachers use their up-to-date subject knowledge and experience to motivate students to make progress. However, apprentices do not always know how much progress they are making. Teachers do not always quickly and accurately identify apprentices' additional learning needs early enough in their programmes of study and, as a consequence, the apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- College-based students develop good practical skills by completing gardening and building work in real-life situations around the college estate. Teachers are skilful at making very good use of the extensive gardens and the wider estate to help students to see the links between theory and practice, within both horticulture and floristry. Students contribute enthusiastically to a stimulating range of tasks and learning activities.
- The pace of learning that teachers set in college-based lessons is good. In the best lessons, teachers know their students well and make sure students work hard on challenging tasks. Through skilful use of questioning, teachers test students' knowledge and help students to find solutions for themselves. As a result, all students participate and learn effectively. However, apprentices do not fully understand how to use the wide range of learning resources to support their learning when they are on their own. This results in them making slower progress.
- In floristry lessons, students create practical designs to a high standard and share good practice with each other. They develop a good understanding of cultural diversity; teachers frequently integrate into lessons topics that celebrate different cultural events and festivals.
- Students develop confidence and are able to use suitable industry language. Staff teach them to identify accurately a wide range of plants using the full Latin names, names of cultivated varieties and common English names. Most teachers develop students' mathematical skills well in the classroom. For example, floristry students cost floral designs accurately, and horticulture students calculate and measure the correct amount of eco-friendly oil which they will use in a garden machinery practical task.
- In the minority of less effective lessons, college-based students are not set challenging targets and therefore they do not achieve their highest potential. Teachers miss opportunities to reinforce previous learning and to share aims and objectives at the start of the lesson. More able students find the work teachers set too easy and consequently do not deepen their understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subject.

- Assessors do not always set apprentices challenging short- and longer-term learning goals. As a consequence these are neither reviewed nor updated regularly, leading to them not achieving their qualifications in the required time.
- For college-based students, teachers effectively assess learning, including health and safety aspects, and students use peer- and self-assessment well. For example, in a horticulture lesson, students acted as team leaders, health and safety managers and grounds maintenance staff, assessing each other's skill levels carefully and giving feedback to help develop communication and team-building skills. Teachers mark students' written work carefully and give constructive written feedback. They consistently correct spelling and grammar mistakes. Teachers support their students well.
- Assessors do not always make clear to apprentices exactly what they have to do to improve. Their monitoring of apprentices' progress is not systematically recorded. Target setting is not effective in supporting apprentices to reach their full potential, and the monitoring of apprentices' progress is not always clear and helpful. They therefore make limited progress. Assessors do not always set challenging tasks, build on or extend learning.
- Students work safely and they feel safe in lessons and at college.

Animal care

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved and are now good. The proportion of students who achieve their qualification is at the national average; in the current year, the proportion of students who leave their course early has declined. Students develop good practical and employability skills. Students' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good.
- Teachers' expectations of individual students' performance are high and, consequently, the majority of students at level 3 achieve high grades. Teachers skilfully use information and learning technology (ILT) and the VLE in theory lessons and tutorials. Teachers integrate video clips, quizzes and sound files into their presentations to illustrate and enhance their teaching. The best lessons have tasks to challenge all students and enable them to reach their full potential. Teachers make excellent use of the learning coaches to ensure that all students are learning. Checks on learning are frequent, and regular recapping enables students to reflect on the progress that they have made. The majority of teachers plan a good variety of interesting tasks.
- In a minority of less successful lessons, teachers do not effectively use ICT, the pace is too slow and there are too few checks on learning. Teachers talk too much and, as a consequence, students do not make good progress in these lessons.
- Teachers are well qualified, have good subject knowledge and recent industry experience, which they use effectively to provide good lessons. Planning is good; the majority of teachers use group profiles to plan activities which address students' individual learning needs, including in the best examples relevant up-to-date information from the individual learning plan (ILP). However, in weaker lessons, teachers do not use group profiles to plan learning.
- The range and quality of the animal collection is excellent and students use this well to develop a wide range of practical skills. Some equipment maintenance is unsatisfactory and feed storage does not reflect best practice.
- Students develop good employability skills from the compulsory work experience. Teachers arrange mock applications and interviews for them. Students can take a good range of additional qualifications which enhance their employability prospects. Community involvement is good and students organise events in aid of local animal charities.
- Teachers' advice and guidance for students prior to joining their course and whilst at college are good. Teachers use diagnostic assessments, tutorials and an assignment set in the first six

weeks to set target grades with students and develop an ILP. Tutors use the tutorial system effectively to record student progress, set students further targets for improvement and review target grades, increasing them where appropriate. However, some targets are insufficiently time constrained.

- The standard of students' work is above that expected for the level of course. The content of student files is good. They contain comprehensive information that students can easily reference and teachers take care to make sure that student notes are thorough. Teachers mark students' work promptly and provide accurate and supportive feedback to students, which enables them to improve. However, a significant minority of work contains too many uncorrected spelling and punctuation errors. For example, one page on a level 2 work experience report had more than 25 uncorrected errors, yet the teacher had not clearly identified this in their feedback.
- In the best lessons teachers develop English and mathematical skills wherever possible, for example by asking students to calculate the area of veterinary surgeries or developing students' technical animal-related scientific vocabulary. Teachers incorporate curricula vitae production and letter writing as part of the work experience module. Teachers do not always develop students' mathematical skills where opportunities exist. For example, 'scoops' of feed instead of weights are referred to in the feed room, missing opportunities to calculate rations and food conversion ratios.
- Teachers make good use of their industry contacts when setting up careers fairs and supplying visiting speakers and people to conduct mock interviews and to provide study tours. These opportunities help students make choices about their career options and contribute to high progression rates. Support for students from teachers is freely available, and enables students to make good progress on their course; teachers also provide good support for students applying to higher education. Students have high regard for their teachers and the college. Additional qualifications, such as college-based lambing and shearing certificates, enhance employment opportunities.
- In the best lessons, teachers effectively explore cultural diversity issues with students. For example, during a cattle identification lesson, teachers made reference to why Hindus do not allow cattle ear tags to be used on their cattle; and in another, the topic of how different cultures treat placental material stimulated good discussion. However, in too many cases, opportunities are lost to discuss diversity themes.

Sport

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programme

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Although the proportion of students aged 16 to 18 who achieved their qualifications significantly improved in 2012/13, too many students did not achieve the qualifications on which they enrolled. However, the proportion of students who leave their course early has declined significantly during 2013/14.
- Students are enthusiastic about their programmes of study and their attendance is good. In the more effective lessons, teachers build a culture of mutual trust and respect; students develop their confidence and make good progress. For example, in an outdoor education lesson, students developed good presentation skills while giving and receiving insightful feedback.
- However, in too many less effective lessons, teachers do not sufficiently take into account the existing skills and knowledge of individual students in their planning. Their expectations of students are too low and, consequently, students do not make sufficient progress.
- Teachers are well qualified and vocationally experienced; in better lessons, they use this experience to good effect to motivate students. A few teachers, who were previously elite sports performers, inspire students through their passion for their subject, frequently providing valuable additional support outside of class time. This commitment motivates students to

achieve and progress to further study or employment. Particularly good student support helps students to achieve their qualifications, despite difficult personal circumstances.

- Students have access to a good range of facilities, including well-kept grass pitches and a high ropes facility, which they use effectively to enhance their practical skills, preparing them well for future employment.
- Teachers promptly identify those students who need extra help, and provide effective support in lessons and through drop-in sessions. However, students do not make enough use of the latter, and are not sufficiently supported through the VLE to complement their studies when absent or outside of lessons.
- Informal personal support by staff is very effective and valued by the students; however, the impact of this is insufficiently recorded to ensure that all instances of poor progress, attendance and performance of students are promptly addressed and improvements gained. Teachers make sure that under-performing students have additional opportunities to participate in sports fixtures or extra activities. However, poor and inconsistent recording of students' attendance and progress through tutorials limits the ability of tutors to make sure that their academic progress improves quickly. Formal tutorials are insufficiently rigorous, tutors do not effectively record information about progress from these and, therefore, students do not have specific targets which push them to reach the highest levels of performance.
- Assessment activities, such as those for practical sport units, enable teachers to make good links to other aspects of the students' study programme. Sport Academy students use the practical knowledge they gain through training sessions to produce evidence for sports coaching and technical analysis. Teachers' feedback on students' work is detailed and clearly directs students as to how they may improve. However, too many students are unable to meet the assessment requirements for written assignments at the first attempt and make insufficient progress as a result.
- Assessment and guidance before students start their programmes, including taster days and trials, ensure that teachers enrol all students on the most appropriate courses for their ability and aspirations. Teachers' correction of English, particularly within assessment feedback, is frequently not consistent or sufficiently detailed to ensure that students improve these skills.
- By meeting the individual needs or requirements of students and ensuring there is no bullying, teachers effectively promote equality of opportunity. However, the promotion of equality themes in lessons is less effective. Students studying nutrition discussed the effect of religion on diet and the preparation for elite performers competing overseas, but there is little formal planning for understanding or celebrating of cultural diversity.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. This is reflected in the variability of success rates across the range of programmes. Many students at level 1 and entry level 3 achieve well. However, for the smaller proportion of students studying at level 2 and GCSE, results were poor.
- There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching, particularly in functional English lessons at higher levels.
- Students on entry level English and some GCSE courses enjoy their learning. Teachers use their expertise well. Students make good progress through taking part in interesting activities which are lively, well-structured and have clear links to students' vocational courses and future plans.
- Students learn well from each other. Teachers use a range of questioning techniques to check what students know already, and to monitor their progress during lessons. Students and teachers make imaginative use of ILT to add interest to lessons and increase students' understanding. Programmes for students studying at entry level are particularly good as

teachers identify, and systematically monitor, the skills individual students need to develop to make good progress.

- In the less effective functional skills lessons, planning does not take sufficient account of the English skills each student needs to improve. Teaching is unimaginative and does not always relate well to students' vocational courses. Students too often repeat activities unnecessarily, resulting in them becoming bored and behaving poorly. Poorly presented slides and hand outs in some lessons prevent students from being able to complete tasks easily.
- Students feel very well supported by the high levels of care, information, advice and personal support provided by teachers. In lessons, highly skilled support staff ensure students participate well by encouraging them to contribute their views in lessons and write down their ideas. Students benefit considerably from the additional support available outside of normal lesson times, enabling them to keep up with the rest of the class. For example, floristry students are provided with ways to help them correctly spell the names of plants they use in their vocational courses.
- Initial assessment takes place, but does not always ensure that teachers place all students on the correct course. Further assessments of students on functional skills programmes provide teachers with useful information about the kinds of English skills students need to develop further. For students working at entry level, teachers use this information well to plan their lessons to help all students to make good progress. However, in most other functional skills lessons, more formalised systems to record specific English learning targets, which teachers can then review to monitor each student's progress, do not exist. In addition, there is no system to track students' progress on their course, resulting in students being unclear about what they have achieved and how well they are progressing.
- Students' written work is of an appropriate standard, and teachers correct punctuation, grammar and spelling accurately. However, too few functional skills teachers provide students with strategies to help them to improve further and become more independent in their learning, for example techniques for learning spellings.
- The promotion of diversity in lessons is variable. In a good lesson, the teacher planned specific activities to challenge students' views; this led to a lesson focusing on speaking aloud, in which students were asked to discuss whether women should play football. Students like the college and feel safe in the buildings and in the grounds.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The Principal provides strong and inspirational leadership. She has taken decisive and successful actions which have improved students' experience at the college, and addressed the recent financial deficit. She is supported well by the recently-established senior leadership team, and is respected by staff. The senior leadership team now has a clear vision for the future of the college.
- The Principal has led a thorough review of the composition and membership of the corporation. Several new governors, with industrial and other specialist experience, who approach their posts with enthusiasm and vigour, have been appointed. The clerk provides a strong and helpful link between the college and the corporation, and excellent support for governors.
- The recently revised system for improving the quality of teaching and learning has not yet had sufficient impact. Managers have invested in professional development and in an extensive programme of supportive lesson observations. Managers at all levels are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new performance management system, but it has not yet had sufficient time to have enough impact. Managers monitor teachers' performance through graded observations of teaching and learning, and the achievement of targets in relation to students' achievement. However, feedback from lesson observations does not focus sufficiently on the progress students are making in lessons. Performance management is largely supportive and encourages teachers to improve their performance.

- Quality improvement processes are thorough and innovative. However, not all teachers understand these well. Managers follow a well-planned sequence of activities to monitor courses and implement change. Senior leaders meet with subject managers and link governors at termly quality review boards, which effectively monitor courses against key performance indicators. Subject managers welcome this support and the strong focus this has brought on individual students. As a result, the proportion of students who leave their course early has declined and is now very low. However, senior managers do not yet make sufficient use of information to gain an overview of the performance of each subject area.
- The comprehensive quality improvement plan is detailed and thorough, but managers did not identify many of the areas for improvement in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is insufficiently rigorous and staff have insufficient involvement with the self-assessment process or knowledge of the content of the report.
- Managers are very responsive to the views of students. For example, timetables have been restructured as a result of students' requests. However, the formal processes for gathering students' views and informing the students of actions taken in response to their feedback are insufficient.
- Managers did not adequately promote or plan for the introduction of study programmes. However, planning and preparation, including promotion and marketing for the next intake of students, are already underway to ensure that next year's students are fully aware of the content of their programme and the importance of English and mathematics.
- Managers are reintroducing agriculture courses, a development which has been well received by the industry. Recent energetic developments have made good progress to engage with employers and to reposition the college as the college of choice for students from Maidenhead.
- The college is working successfully as part of the local consortium to provide a coherent A-level offer for students. However, arrangements to prioritise development, enable staff to plan ahead, and ensure that courses are implemented successfully require improvement. Management of the recently-introduced apprenticeship programme does not adequately ensure that apprentices are tracked and monitored to complete their courses in a timely way.
- Staff use a wide range of cross-college activities well to promote equality and diversity, resulting in a calm and harmonious environment. An 'anti-bullying tree', produced by students, has pride of place in the main college atrium. The 'Wildcats' football team of foundation students is coached by the sports students and a 'frisbee' event at lunchtimes for students on all courses is well attended.
- Teachers do not always take sufficient advantage during lessons of opportunities to explore equality and diversity in the vocational context and daily life. Managers monitor the recruitment and retention of different groups of students. However, managers have not yet taken sufficient targeted action to reduce underachievement by particular groups.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements; it is robust, comprehensive and well planned, and goes beyond expectations in scope and thoroughness. Students feel very safe and supported in an inclusive atmosphere of respect. They feel able to raise personal concerns and are confident that teachers will take seriously any problems they may raise. Managers have taken prompt and decisive action in response to students' concerns about inappropriate behaviour and bullying.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Berkshire College of Agriculture

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	2	-	3	-	3	4	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	2	-	3	-	3	4	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	2	-	3	-	3	4	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	2	-	3	-	3	4	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3
Public services	2
Early years and playwork	3
Horticulture and floristry	3
Animal care and veterinary science	2
Sport	3
Foundation English	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Specialist further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1216							
	Part-time: 804							
Principal/CEO	Gillian May							
Date of previous inspection	May 2011							
Website address	www.bca.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	138	51	398	32	639	80	6	21
Part-time	7	68	6	100	3	23	0	20
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+	16-18	19+
	4	4	34	28	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	n/a							
Part-time	351							
Number of community learners	65							
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"> ▪ None 							

Contextual information

Berkshire College of Agriculture, which appointed a new Principal in September 2013, is a specialist land-based college offering further education courses in land-based subjects, a range of other vocational subjects and A levels. It is located just outside the town of Maidenhead. The campus is based around a 144-hectare estate, comprising a range of land-based commercial units and landscaped grounds. Approximately three quarters of further education students are aged between 16 and 18 years. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is the same as that in the local area. The proportion of the local population who holds no qualification is lower than the national average, and about four fifths of residents have achieved intermediate level qualifications. Rates of unemployment in the local area are lower than the rate nationally, and the proportion of pupils who leave school with five GCSEs at grades A* to C is about 10 percentage points higher than the national average. Although the college is located in a relatively prosperous area, there are some areas of greater deprivation locally and in more rural communities.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Pemble HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the vice 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 students' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning lessons, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant 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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