

Coulsdon Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		25–28 February 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This college is good because:

- Following the federation with Reigate College in the spring of 2013, leaders and managers at all levels have been highly effective, in partnership with all college staff and students, in transforming the ethos of the college, raising aspirations and promoting high standards.
- Both the quality of lessons, and students' attitudes to learning, have improved and are now good. In the vast majority of lessons students work productively and learn effectively.
- Students' desire to succeed, and their willingness to work hard to do so, are now high. Students are given, and do, much more work outside lessons than was previously the case.
- Students are set ambitious targets, and teachers and support staff work with determination to ensure that students achieve their potential through rigorous monitoring of their progress.
- Students who did not achieve well in English or mathematics at school benefit from teaching that motivates them to achieve in these subjects, and as a consequence are working diligently to improve their skills and knowledge.
- The college is now a very pleasant environment in which to learn, work or visit. The college community is particularly harmonious, and students' conduct is characterised by unfailing courtesy and respect for others.

This is not yet an outstanding college because:

- Until the current academic year, students' achievements were poor, with too many students either making slow progress, not achieving their qualifications, or not reaching their potential.
- In a small minority of lessons students' progress is slower because the teaching is pedestrian and does not capture their interest.
- In many subject areas very little teaching is outstanding.
- Managers and teachers do not yet show a sufficient understanding of how to use data effectively and consistently to evaluate progress and plan for improvements.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding lessons by identifying and sharing the best practice from across the federation and building on the training and coaching that are already in place.
- Ensure that all teaching, learning and assessment are good or better through detailed reviews of lessons and students' work that focus on identifying where, and why, students are not yet making as much progress in their learning as they should. Make sure that weaker teachers develop the confidence to reflect on their areas for development, and agree strategies with them to enliven their teaching and raise their expectations of what students can achieve.
- Strengthen the consistency and implementation of quality-assurance arrangements to secure consistently high standards in all aspects of the college's work. In particular, ensure that leaders and managers interrogate the evidence for subject self-evaluation and hold staff to account to make sure that judgements are based on realistic appraisals of evidence.
- Ensure that middle managers and teachers are trained to use data on all aspects of students' progress and achievements consistently, perceptively, and effectively, in order to evaluate performance accurately and identify precise strategies for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Students enjoy their courses and the vast majority are making good progress towards achieving their qualifications and fulfilling their potential. Most students display an admirable determination to succeed and are supported well to do so. Although it is too early to be certain that students' results in 2014 will match their aspirations, or their teachers' predictions, the prospects are highly encouraging.
- During the current academic year only a small number of students have dropped subjects or left college. Attendance at, and punctuality to, lessons have improved significantly and are good. Most students are working hard both in and out of lessons. Students' progress towards meeting their ambitious target grades, which is monitored very carefully, indicates a picture of significant improvement and augurs well for their achievements at the end of the academic year.
- Students' current progress is in stark contrast to the achievements of students attending the college in the previous three years. Despite a slight improvement in the proportion of students who achieved their qualifications in 2012/13 compared with previous years, too many students failed to complete their courses successfully. The college attracts students with weaker GCSE results than is typically seen in sixth-form colleges, but nevertheless far too many students still made slow progress in comparison with their prior attainment. Students' results, and their progress, were consistently better for those taking vocational qualifications than for those on A/AS-level or GCSE courses.
- On advanced-level courses, in most subjects, students are acquiring the skills, understanding and techniques to succeed in examinations or assessments. Expectations of students' capabilities, which were far too low in the past, have risen. Teachers are, rightly, more demanding, and on most courses both the volume and the quality of students' work have improved significantly. As a consequence, standards of work have improved considerably. However, in a small minority of courses neither the standards that students reach, nor their teachers' expectations, are sufficiently high.
- Many students start at the college having not yet achieved a GCSE at grade C or above in English or mathematics. Although results in these subjects were historically weak at the college, current students recognise the importance of these subjects for their futures, and are working diligently to succeed. For example, students who arrive at college professing their dislike for

mathematics derived from their experience in the subject at secondary school are persevering well. Their diligence is matched by teachers' determination to provide good teaching and support in both subjects. Students' progress in both subjects is good.

- College managers have taken appropriate action to tackle variations in achievement between students of different ethnic or cultural heritages. Analysis of such variations is comprehensive, and strategies to ensure that all students have the same opportunity to succeed are having a positive impact, with most gaps in achievement narrowing in 2012/13.
- The very significant improvements in students' attitudes towards learning, their demeanour in lessons and conduct around the college, and their attendance and punctuality, have had a tangible impact upon their future prospects of success both at college and in progressing to positive destinations. Second-year students report, accurately, that the culture of the college has been transformed: they feel more valued and respected, safer, and much clearer about what is expected of them. Students' unfailing and thoughtful courtesy and good nature, combined with their respect for one another's very diverse backgrounds, provide evidence of the new ethos.
- Students' opportunities to learn through experience about the potential avenues that they could follow after college, whether these be higher education, apprenticeships or employment, are too limited, although a much higher number of students now benefit from careers advice. Opportunities for work experience are very limited except in health and social care and early years, and the range of extra-curricular activities, including external visits, available to students is too narrow. Although the proportion of students who progress to university has remained constant, scope remains for raising both the number and the aspirations of university applicants.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have been brought about since the federation arrangements started, and these have had a very positive impact on students' progress, which had been poor in previous years. A range of new initiatives to enthuse both teachers and students about learning, combined with highly effective identification of, and training to support, teachers' development needs, has led to consistently good teaching and learning across most of the college.
- Very significant improvements in students' attitudes towards learning have liberated teachers to focus on improving their professional practice and helping students to learn quickly, rather than on managing their behaviour and trying to motivate them. Strategies to improve students' dispositions have been implemented consistently by all leaders, managers and teachers, and have been remarkably successful. Students now attend well, arrive punctually, and are ready to learn from the start of the lesson.
- Good teaching is underpinned by a raft of measures that have been implemented consistently across the college to secure effective learning. For example, detailed schemes of learning combined with high-quality printed resources for students to use provide a secure basis on which to build students' skills and knowledge. Expectations of the amount of work students should do in their own time are now high and all students are set regular, meaningful work to complete independently. Increasingly, teachers recognise the need to help many students to improve their English and mathematics, and do so when opportunities arise. In most classrooms, visual displays are of a high quality and help to immerse students in the subject.
- Where lessons are most effective, teachers display high levels of energy and commitment and encourage students to discuss, analyse and evaluate their work, developing higher-order thinking skills. In many lessons teachers are adept at using questioning techniques to probe and prompt all students, keeping students on their toes and promoting rapid progress. For example, in an outstanding and enjoyable public services lesson students acquired quickly a detailed technical grasp of sports massage, aided by both the teacher's questioning and her vivid visual demonstrations of the impact of massage on the body.
- Where lessons are not as effective, teachers are less adept at building upon the good materials they use to enthuse students. Questioning is more mundane and less challenging, the tasks that

students are given are mechanical and dull, and although students usually remain well focused many of them do not participate or show the same thirst for learning that is evident in the better lessons. Nevertheless, even in these weaker lessons, students do learn, albeit more slowly.

- The assessment of students' work is good in most instances. In most subjects the feedback that students receive is encouraging, specific, detailed, and well structured. Students receive clear guidance on how they can improve their work and on their progress towards their target grade, and in the best instances feedback focuses well on helping students to add more depth and analysis to their work. Most teachers are assiduous in correcting spelling and grammatical errors and directing students towards the accurate use of English. In a few subjects, feedback does not give enough guidance to students on how to improve. In these subjects the quality of students' work is often of a lower standard.
- The college has a relatively high proportion of students who require extra help with their studies. Many of these students are on intermediate-level courses, and in all of these classes a support assistant is deployed, usually effectively, to assist individual students. Students who need further help, or are slipping behind in their work, are referred to a 'learning improvement programme' where they receive extra, personalised help. This intervention is usually very successful. However, not all students referred to this programme choose to attend, and interventions in these cases are not always sufficiently swift.
- Meticulous monitoring systems have been introduced to track students' progress and these are highly effective. Frequent reports are shared with students and their parents or carers, and these indicate students' progress towards meeting their target grades, as well their attendance, motivation, attitude towards learning and effort. The information from these reports is increasingly used by managers to evaluate subject performance, although this remains an area for further improvement.
- The tutorial system has been overhauled and students benefit from good support from their tutors. Group tutorials, focusing on common themes, are usually appreciated by students, although a minority of these sessions are dull. Individual support from tutors is good, as tutors use one-to-one sessions productively to encourage and motivate students to improve.
- The college's virtual learning environment is increasingly well populated with a wide range of learning resources that students find beneficial in their independent study. New technologies are increasingly well used by teachers, both in and out of lessons, to broaden their repertoire of strategies to maintain and strengthen students' interest in their subjects, and to increase the diversity of resources accessible to them.
- The student population is very diverse, and teachers' confidence in taking different cultural norms into account in their interactions with students has increased markedly. In lessons, scope remains for teachers to think more carefully about how to ensure that their learning materials, and the examples they use to illustrate learning points, reflect more fully the gender, cultural and ethnic diversity of their students.

Science and mathematics

Good

16-19 study programmes

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which reflects students' current progress. Although a higher proportion of students achieved their qualifications in 2012/13 than in previous years, results were still below average on academic courses, although they were satisfactory on vocational courses. At the time of inspection, most students who started the academic year are on track to achieve their qualifications.
- In most lessons, students work hard either individually or in groups. The development of research and evaluative skills within advanced-level science is good. For example, in a biology class, each student enthusiastically identified an endocrine disease of his or her choice using

laptop computers, and then researched for information about it against previously-agreed criteria in preparation for a presentation to the rest of the class.

- In the sciences, students enjoy and appreciate the significant amount of practical work they do. Teachers are adept at contextualising topics effectively and ensuring students develop good practical skills. For example, an imaginative demonstration of a crude distillation experiment served as a highly effective way of encouraging students to understand and appreciate the processes involved, at the same time as learning how to set up appropriate apparatus in preparation for an experiment to separate a mixture of alcohol and water.
- In both science and mathematics, teachers explain concepts clearly and often use good analogies to help students to understand them. They use directed and probing questioning effectively to ascertain and deepen learning and understanding but, in a few instances, do not involve all of the students. In a minority of lessons, students spend too much time working through problems individually, a task that could be done outside lessons.
- Comprehensive learning resource packs not only provide students with a tool to prepare essential notes but also challenge the more able to achieve their full potential. In less effective lessons, teachers rely on the printed resources too much, resulting in a limited range of learning and assessment methods being used. Students have too few opportunities to benefit from enrichment activities, for example trips, that would broaden their understanding of the application of science.
- Resources in the laboratories are good and students find the materials available on the virtual learning environment, such as past papers, presentations and quizzes, useful. However, teachers do not always take advantage of opportunities to use new technology to promote learning.
- Teachers track and monitor students' progress against aspirational target grades effectively. Homework is given regularly and marked and returned quickly, with constructive comments to help students to improve. Regular tests are set and half-termly interim reports are produced. These indicate good progress, especially in GCSE mathematics. Tutors and teachers, together with the students, draw up clear action plans to tackle any areas of concern. Teachers give their time willingly, both in and out of class, to support students. Students value highly the extra workshops provided for all non-vocational courses.
- The development of students' English and mathematics is satisfactory. Teachers provide a good focus on terminology and often learner packs include glossaries of relevant terms; but spelling and grammatical errors in students' work are not always corrected. Students who have not yet achieved a high grade in GCSE mathematics are working determinedly to succeed. However, on numeracy courses, teachers take insufficient account of the range of abilities and prior knowledge of the students.
- Teachers are conscious of the need to promote diversity in science and mathematics and do so, for example, by emphasising the contribution of women and minority ethnic heritage scientists. A few lessons, however, do not include planning for the range of student abilities in the group.

English

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching and learning are good or better in the majority of lessons. This is reflected in the improved attendance, retention and progress of students in the current academic year, and in good pass rates for AS/A-level students in 2012/13. The proportion of completing GCSE students who passed at grades A* to C in 2012/13 also improved, and pass rates for functional skills in English rose significantly. In comparison to their attainment at GCSE, students on AS-level courses made very good progress, but on A-level English language and literature courses students' grades were below those expected.

- Lessons have good introductions, in which aims and activities are outlined, and good conclusions using activities to review and confirm learning. Teachers use targeted questions effectively, prompting students to develop their answers more fully, especially on AS- and A-level courses. A strong focus on examination assessment schemes helps students to understand how their work will be assessed, and students frequently assess each other's work to consolidate understanding. Enrichment activities include regular theatre visits and occasional speakers.
- Teachers use a range of activities to appeal to different learning styles, and adapt tasks, where necessary, to meet the needs of individual learners. In one excellent GCSE lesson, students wore different 'hats' labelled with aspects such as 'creativity', 'facts', and 'feelings', and analysed a piece of writing accordingly before sharing their findings. In a small minority of lessons, teachers did not introduce tasks clearly enough, reducing students' progress, or tasks took too long, leading to a loss of momentum.
- Staff make good use of electronic whiteboards for interactive purposes as well as display. For example, a GCSE student moved definitions around the whiteboard as directed by his classmates, to match the correct source words, in a task illustrating examination assessment. Teaching teams have produced resource materials which provide valuable support for learning. These include, for example, background material, helpful summaries and prompts to structure students' own analyses of literature and encourage independent learning.
- Students are keen to learn and work well in lessons, generally making satisfactory or good progress. They know how well they are progressing and what aspects they need to improve. GCSE students who have taken the course before are making better progress this year due to the improved teaching. They identified increased confidence in speaking in front of others as a particular area of progress. In a dynamic GCSE lesson, students gave powerful persuasive speeches as part of a role play based on the novel *The Hunger Games*.
- Teachers and tutors carefully monitor students' progress in terms of work completed, standards achieved and grades awarded compared to their aspirational minimum target grades. Teachers provide specific learning targets in interim reviews, while tutors provide helpful advice and encouragement in one-to-one tutorials. They encourage students to think of practical ways to improve their work and raise their grades, and also provide well-informed guidance about university applications.
- Students on all courses are on track to achieve in line with, or above, their aspirational target grades. Their classwork and formal assessments show good progress over time. For example, A-level students demonstrate growing confidence in tasks such as the application of linguistic theories, analysis of literary texts and essay writing skills; GCSE students demonstrate the ability to argue a case in writing; and functional skills students have researched and delivered presentations successfully.
- Learning support assistants effectively help identified students in GCSE and functional skills English lessons. Students for whom English is a second language (ESOL) do not receive targeted ESOL activities integrated within GCSE courses and, on functional skills courses, too many ESOL students are working on tasks below their ability level.
- Teachers set homework regularly, and mark it promptly and with an appropriate level of detail. They annotate students' work carefully, showing which assessment objectives have been met, and provide comments, guidance and follow-up tasks to improve achievement.
- Students confirm that the college provides a calm and safe environment. Those who were students at the college last year identify the good standard of behaviour now prevalent as a strong indicator of improvement. Teachers promote equality and an awareness of diversity well through the choice of texts and supporting materials.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- The college was inspected in 2011 and 2013. On both occasions it was judged to be inadequate. In the spring of 2013, it was agreed that the college would form a federation with Reigate

College, a sixth form college judged outstanding by Ofsted. Since Easter 2013, the Principal of Reigate College has been Executive Principal of Coulsdon College and the governing body has been reconstituted to include governors from Reigate College. A new Principal of Coulsdon College was appointed in January 2014.

- Governors, leaders and teachers now have high expectations of their students. They share a passionate sense of purpose: to provide high quality education in a supportive community. The rapid transformation in the ethos of the college bears testament to the success of the federation with Reigate College. Senior leaders set the tone for promoting high expectations through frequent interaction with students and staff. An unwavering focus on improving learning, teaching, support and monitoring of progress has reaped rewards. Students display good study habits, attend regularly, are punctual, courteous and make the requisite effort.
- A new corporation, including six governors shared with Reigate College, monitors the quality of students' experience closely. Governors have a sound grasp of the issues and, emboldened by the federation, show no tolerance of underperformance.
- Effective performance management has led to decisive and successful intervention to eradicate weaker teaching. The individual support programme for teachers who are struggling is having a positive impact in improving practice. Improvements are further consolidated by an array of arrangements to share good practice, targeted staff development and helpful coaching. Appraisals focus on what matters: teaching, learning, assessment and standards achieved by students. They lead to clear and appropriate targets for improvement and also identify staff development needs. A small number of teachers have not been appraised recently enough.
- Self-assessment overall is broadly accurate and identifies sensible priorities for improvement. Some teaching departments do not give sufficient weight in their evaluation to significant weaknesses, nor do they analyse data with sufficient sophistication. Neither curriculum managers nor teachers are yet to make the best use of data to analyse students' progress consistently across the college. The quality of course reviews and related improvement plans is inconsistent and too many reviews are poor. Leaders and managers have not yet tackled these weaknesses sufficiently thoroughly through the consistent implementation of quality-assurance procedures.
- Arrangements for evaluating the quality of lessons are sound, comprising formal graded observations and frequent, less formal, but equally productive, drop-in visits to classes. Key areas for improvement are identified, which usually lead to sharply-focused action plans. Sometimes there is a mismatch between the grade awarded to a lesson and the record of the evaluation: observers can be over generous. In a minority of cases, observers do not focus sufficiently on the progress students make or the impact of teaching. On occasions, the delay between the date of the lesson observation and the agreement of the related action plan is too long.
- The curriculum has been revised recently to provide increased flexibility. Young people can combine A/AS-level study with BTEC courses, and guidance on which pathway to choose is clear and takes into account students' prior attainment and aspirations. College leaders' response to the requirements of the Study Programmes initiative is satisfactory; provision in English and mathematics is comprehensive and good, but opportunities for students to do work experience are too limited.
- College leaders and teachers listen closely to, and act upon, students' ideas for improvement. Surveys are used well, students' views are part of course reviews and senior leaders are readily available to hear students' concerns.
- The promotion of equality and celebration of diversity are at the heart of the college. The college's diversity calendar has a wide range of events to raise awareness and promote positive attitudes. The equality policy and its objectives are sound, with an appropriate emphasis on narrowing achievement gaps. Recent staff development has focused on improving the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons, with some success. Bullying is not tolerated. Complaints are not analysed for equal opportunities issues, and the analysis of staffing matters in relation to equal opportunities is also underdeveloped.

- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The college is a safe environment; safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriate; training is regular and there is a designated senior member of staff and governor. The single central record is comprehensive and arrangements for ensuring health and safety are sound.
- A significant fall in student enrolments in the current year is a considerable concern. Governors and senior leaders are acutely aware of the need to secure financial stability. They are taking appropriate steps to raise recruitment in 2014/15.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Coulsdon Sixth Form College

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	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	2
Mathematics and statistics	2
English	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Sixth form college							
Age range of learners	16-18							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,212							
	Part-time: 15							
Principal/CEO	Mr Brett Freeman							
Date of previous inspection	January 2013							
Website address	www.coulsdon.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	-	-	118	2	622	33	-	-
Part-time	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
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+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
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:	N/A							

Contextual information

Coulsdon College is a sixth-form college situated in the south of the London Borough of Croydon, on the Surrey border. Following poor inspection outcomes in 2011 and early 2013, in the spring of 2013 the college formed a federation with Reigate College, with executive leadership provided by Reigate College. A new Principal of Coulsdon College, reporting to the Executive Principal, was appointed from January 2014.

Most of the college's students travel south from central or north Croydon to the college, which is a significant journey. Most students are from minority ethnic heritages. Students arrive at the college with GCSE results that are significantly lower, on average, than is typically seen in sixth-form colleges. The college offers a broad curriculum with courses at different levels, and students have the opportunity to mix vocational and academic courses.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Alan Hinchliffe, HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Assistant Principal (Quality and Learning) 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 to 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 relevant 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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