

Croydon College

General further education college

Inspection dates		28 April–2 May 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
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 provider is good because:

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and have improved rapidly. Teachers have high aspirations for their students and develop their English skills particularly well, which is important in a college community where many of the students do not speak English as their first language.
- The college has an extremely strong focus on the very good development of students' personal and employability skills through its outstanding volunteering initiatives and many other projects, which have a significant impact on the local communities in which the students reside.
- Students develop good practical and technical skills and are particularly adept at using specialist language fluently to demonstrate their knowledge of the subjects they are studying.
- Managers and staff have transformed the learning environment within the college very successfully, enhancing its reputation in the local community as a caring, safe and inclusive place in which to study.
- Leaders and managers successfully combine a determination to improve through strong quality improvement processes with a clear vision of how to raise the aspirations of the college's local communities.
- Students appreciate the very good support they receive, particularly those who have additional learning needs.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Whilst improving in most areas of the college, attendance rates are low and punctuality remains poor in a small number of subjects.
- In 2012/13, too few students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses completed their qualification successfully.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge students to achieve their full potential in lessons.
- The college does not yet offer sufficient opportunities for all students to take part in meaningful external work placements to enhance their work readiness and employment prospects.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the much improved teaching and learning in the college result in a continuation of the trend of rapidly improving success rates, most notably for students aged 16 to 18.
- Share more of the good practice of the many outstanding teachers in the college who set high expectations for their students.
- Ensure that attendance and punctuality are consistently good across all areas of the college by continuing to take firm actions to reinforce with students the need to attend lessons regularly and on time as an important part of succeeding at college and developing their employability skills.
- Explore ways in which a number of subject areas can offer external work experience for a period of time during students' studies at college in order to take advantage of the rapidly improving partnerships with employers and to enhance the many initiatives already in place to bring students into contact with employers through their coursework.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Croydon College is a good college which makes a substantial difference to the lives of students of all ages within its local community. Students leave the college with a wide range of skills that enhance their personal lives and work readiness. However, although success rates have improved very significantly over the last two years, too few students to date achieve the qualifications for which they have studied. As a result, students' outcomes overall require improvement. The college is very confident that its good teaching and learning, the highly effective leadership and management and the much improved in-year retention will lead to another significant increase in success rates at the end of the 2013/14 academic year.
- Students enjoy, and take pride in, studying at the college and feel very safe. They are very aware of issues such as extremism and people and sexual trafficking. Students' respect for each other is very evident. The college's thriving and extremely successful volunteering and charity work have a very positive impact on large cross-sections of the local community, many of whom face very challenging personal circumstances. Students taking part in this work value highly the improvements in their self-confidence, team working and leadership abilities, as well as in specialist skills such as event management.
- Students develop good practical and technical skills, as well as a sound knowledge of theoretical concepts. Many are extremely adept at using specialist terms fluently to describe their learning and to express themselves in lessons. They learn how to work well independently and in small groups. More than 1,000 students have taken part successfully this year in a very wide range of internal, local, regional and national competitions in recognition of their good skills development.
- Success rates have improved dramatically both prior to, and since, the last inspection, and particularly so in 2012/13. This improvement in performance has been most evident for the smaller cohort of adult students for whom success rates are now high, most notably at levels 1 and 2. However, success rates for students aged 16 to 18 remain low, particularly on level 3 courses. Success rates for their adult peers on level 3 courses are satisfactory. College data show that retention rates for both the 16 to 18 age group and for level 3 courses were significantly better at the time of the inspection when compared to the same period last year.
- Much of the improvement in the college's performance over the last two years is attributable to vocational courses, although overall success rates remain low. The most marked improvements have been in health and social care and public services, where success rates are now high, and

in courses preparing students generally for life and work, where they are satisfactory overall, but high in subjects such as ESOL. However, a number of subject areas have remained resistant to this much improved performance, most notably visual and performing arts, hospitality and catering, construction and business management. The college is confident that success rates will improve significantly in most of these subjects in 2013/14, based on the good teaching and learning observed by inspectors.

- A-level provision forms a much smaller part of the college's curriculum offer, but success rates are very low and, in the case of students on the second year of their A-level programme, have declined significantly over two years. The relatively new A-level management team has implemented a number of very significant changes to the provision this year, which are having a noticeably positive impact on attendance and on the progress students are making.
- Attendance rates are satisfactory and improving following the implementation of a number of successful and, in some cases, innovative initiatives to bring about a change in students' attitudes regarding their presence at college. However, the college recognises the need to improve attendance further as the rate of improvement is still too variable in different curriculum areas; attendance was low during the week of inspection.
- Initiatives introduced by the college to develop students' employability skills have been successful in exposing students to the world of work in a number of different ways, including through imaginative projects and live briefs. They also develop good employment-related skills in lessons in most subject areas. However, students are not yet able to take undertake external work placements in most subject areas.
- In 2012/13, too few students made the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment and not enough achieved their A-level qualifications at grades A* to B. The college has spent much of the last year refining its processes for measuring the progress that students make based on their predicted grades. The majority are now making good progress towards completing their studies, with a higher proportion more likely to achieve high grades. Current students produce written work of a high standard.
- The college has been extremely successful in reducing the gap that previously existed between students with identified learning needs, who performed very poorly, and their peers. A small number of cohorts of students from minority ethnic heritages achieve particularly well, most notably young African students. Others, such as those students aged 16 to 18 from White British and Caribbean backgrounds, perform more poorly than the college average.
- The college has been highly successful in recruiting students who were in receipt of free school meals prior to enrolling at the college or who were formerly looked after children. Numbers of these students have increased significantly and, so far in 2013/14, they have all been retained on their chosen qualifications. The proportion who successfully completes their qualification is in line with the overall college average.
- Significant improvements are evident since the last inspection in the ways in which students develop good English and mathematics skills in both discrete lessons and alongside their main studies. However, this much greater focus on English and mathematics has not yet resulted in sufficient students achieving qualifications in these subjects. The proportion who is successful in achieving GCSEs at grades A* to C is low in mathematics and very low in English. Functional skills success rates are improving rapidly but remain low, particularly in English. Currently, very few students progress from functional skills to GCSEs.
- Success rates for apprentices are improving, but vary too much across curriculum areas. Whilst overall success rates have been low for the last two years, many more apprentices now complete their qualification in the timescale planned for them when they started the courses than previously. A restructuring of work-based learning within the college and the appointment of a new manager for the area are starting to lead to improvements in the quality of the apprenticeship provision.
- The college has been successful in capturing data on destinations for most of its students when they finish their courses. The focus on progression to employment and higher education is strong and is reflected, for example, in the increasing numbers of students in business and

visual and performing arts who enter higher education. Internal progression is good, particularly in areas such as ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) and early years provision. Progression rates for AS-level students to the second year of A-level studies are low, and declining, although the college is confident that the many improvements in this area over the last 12 months will reverse this trend at the end of 2013/14.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good following rapid and extensive improvements since the previous inspection. Leaders and managers have focused relentlessly on supporting staff to develop their teaching skills and to improve lessons. The proportion of good lessons has increased significantly since the last inspection, so much so that inadequate teaching and learning are now rare. Outstanding teaching and learning are now much more prevalent across the college, although the college recognises the need to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons still further.
- Highly effective staff training and development have successfully raised most teachers' awareness of the need to improve planning for learning in lessons. Teachers are encouraged to share their experiences and to observe each other's lessons routinely, and as often as possible, refining their techniques and sharing good practice. Advanced practitioners provide very effective individual support for teachers, which is valued highly in all subject areas.
- Staff at all levels throughout the college are proud of the often considerable differences they make to students' lives and to their future prospects. Leaders, managers, teachers and support staff all constantly seek more effective ways in which to challenge students to achieve their best. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers are not sufficiently skilled at challenging the most able and skilled students to achieve their full potential.
- Teachers understand fully the importance of improving students' English and mathematics skills alongside the other vocational and academic skills they learn. Teachers are particularly confident and adept at integrating English with practical and theory classes, emphasising to students the need to develop their writing and speaking skills in order to enhance their chances of employment and/or progression to further study. Many lessons involve students in an imaginative range of activities to emphasise their wider appreciation of the importance of the use of good English, such as presentation and debating skills.
- A high proportion of lessons are stimulating, lively and productive in improving students' skills and knowledge. Students enjoy the work they do in lessons and value highly the support they receive from skilled and experienced teachers. Students develop good specialist practical and technical skills and become very adept at expressing themselves in lessons using sophisticated subject-related terminology and phrases. Peer support is extensive in the best lessons where students work well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect to challenge and explore concepts and ideas, or to refine their practical skills. The vast majority of students contribute confidently to discussions and presentations in lessons.
- A minority of teachers plan too many activities in lessons, so that they become rushed with not enough time for students to complete them or to reflect properly on their learning. Lapses in behaviour disrupt a small number of classes and inhibit students' progress and learning. Staff are sometimes too tolerant of such behaviour.
- A reliable and extensive framework of lesson observations provides managers with a very good range of information about the quality of lessons. Observation reports are generally succinct and purposeful, commenting clearly on students' learning and on the progress and skills gained during lessons. Summary strengths and areas for development arising in lessons are realistic and focus on the effectiveness of strategies to improve learning. The college's quality improvement plan brings together the most recurrent strengths and weaknesses in teaching to clearly identify staff training needs and the focus for future lesson observations.
- Teachers who the college identifies through lesson observations as needing to improve their teaching skills receive carefully targeted and sustained support from advanced practitioners and

their own managers. This support can often last up to a year if necessary and leads to clear improvements in teachers' classroom practice in almost all cases. In addition to formal lesson observations, leaders and managers conduct frequent learning walks and drop-ins to lessons to assess particular aspects of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Teachers provide very good support for students, both during and outside lessons. Specialist and very knowledgeable learning and welfare support staff provide good advice and guidance on financial, emotional, health, housing and lifestyle matters. Many students are able to overcome considerable personal obstacles, continue their studies and progress to employment or further learning because of the very effective support they receive at the college. Students are confident about seeking the support they require and understand fully the good range of support networks available throughout the college.
- Managers and teachers make very good use of assessment activities to record evidence of students' learning and to develop it further. Managers and staff in all subject areas have reviewed and improved the scheduling of assessments to eradicate clashes in busy assessment periods or long gaps between assessments. Informal assessment is now much more frequent at course level, enabling students to be aware of the progress they are making and how they can liaise with their teachers to improve their work. Teachers check individual students' learning often in lessons; although, in a small number of classes, this questioning is insufficiently purposeful or focused.
- The college has a clear and well understood strategy to raise students' awareness of their own progress. As a result, almost all students have a very good understanding of their progress and of the areas where they need to do further work to improve. Teachers and students make good use of weekly tutorials to update personal learning targets through the very accessible and highly valued progress tracker system. They review and adjust the targets carefully at six-weekly intervals during individual tutorials. Teachers also use group tutorials well to raise students' awareness of a wide range of very relevant personal, social and cultural matters affecting both themselves and the local communities in which they live.
- Since the last inspection, the college has responded well to the requirements of study programmes to improve students' employability skills and their career prospects more generally. A logical and well understood process links students' applications and their enrolment to the courses the students wish to study and their next destinations. Students receive good support and encouragement in lessons and in the wider college community to develop their employability skills. The college's employability hub provides a very popular focal point for a vibrant and productive range of employment-related activities, such as interview practice, career planning and visits from employers. Students benefit from good links between the hub and local employers who are now playing a key role in careers events and talks at the college.
- The college's learning resource and library area provides a calm and welcoming environment in which students can study outside lessons. Careful zoning of the library provides useful spaces for silent study, group work and for computer-based activity. Knowledgeable staff provide good advice and guidance to students. Both staff and students make good use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) which incorporates a wide range of interesting resources and activities.
- Students work well together and learn in a harmonious atmosphere of mutual respect. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is satisfactory across the college as a whole. Some teachers plan their lessons well to develop and reinforce students' understanding of equality and diversity, but others miss opportunities to do so and occasionally perpetuate stereotypes that are prevalent in particular subject areas.

Early years and nursing**16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in early years and nursing are good. Success rates for students on early years courses have been low and below national rates, but are improving. In 2013/14, teachers have benefited from a new management structure and a range of successful initiatives that have improved students' retention, attendance and punctuality. Success rates on the Access to Higher Education in nursing course are high and students make good progress, as they do on early years courses at levels 1 and 2. However, teachers do not challenge students sufficiently on level 3 early years programmes to achieve their full potential. Students generally, in both subject areas, develop good employability skills through high quality work placements in partnership with employers. The majority of students progress to higher level further education courses, employment or higher education.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students on most courses and the majority use their qualifications and expertise in the early years, general practice, nursing and psychology sectors to teach thought-provoking and interesting lessons that enable students to progress well and to develop a good understanding of the demands of working in health settings, including the National Health Service, and with children.
- Teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) well to enhance their teaching, making good use of video clips and other resources to bring lessons to life and to demonstrate how practitioners use theory in real life scenarios. They also encourage students to use ILT as much as possible to present their work and to research key topics. For example, students observed during the inspection developed their computing skills well through researching interactive games available for children and young people on the internet. Students benefit from the college's online learning environment which enables them to study effectively away from the college at times and in places that suit their personal and family needs.
- The accurate assessment of students' pre-existing skills and additional learning needs when students enrol at the college enables teachers and support staff to plan their teaching and assistance effectively to meet the individual needs of each student. Staff use this information skilfully to ensure they challenge most students to produce the best work they can. Students with additional support needs, such as learning difficulties and hearing and sight impairments, receive very good help provided by appropriately qualified support staff. This enables them to progress and to achieve at the same rate as their peers.
- Students develop very good English skills in lessons through teachers who encourage them to practise their writing skills and who expect students to use precise medical and early years terminology in their written work and when answering questions in lessons. Students record any new words they learn and their definitions in an on-going glossary which they keep with them and develop throughout their courses. Students demonstrate considerable self-confidence when speaking and reading aloud in lessons. Early years students study video footage of violent incidents, including racial hatred, in order to gain experience of how to handle the vocabulary used by people when they find themselves in unfamiliar and threatening circumstances.
- Nursing students benefit from dynamic and innovative mathematics teaching which helps them to develop the skills to measure medication and fluids accurately. However, not all early years teachers are sufficiently confident to integrate the teaching of mathematics with their lessons.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance from experienced staff, both before and during their time at college. The highly effective support they receive ensures they enrol on the right courses to suit their needs and helps to raise their aspirations to progress to higher level courses, including university, and to employment. Students benefit greatly from the frequent well-planned tutorials with teachers and other specialist support staff which help them with their coursework and social and welfare issues.

- Teachers promote equality, diversity and social inclusion appropriately in the majority of lessons. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of the needs and rights of others and are respectful of their peers' different cultures and beliefs. They acquire a good understanding of issues related to their local communities and the subjects they are studying through hosting and attending events, for example on human trafficking. This particular event resulted in a partnership project with performing arts students to produce a play for staff from the college and the local authority, designed to raise their awareness of trafficking. Students on early years courses have achieved awards and improved their personal and social skills through spending substantial amounts of time doing voluntary work with charities for the homeless and for orphans.

Science and mathematics

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in both subjects and this is reflected in the much improved progress that students now make during lessons and overall. This is particularly true in science where, following poor success rates in 2012/13, the college recruited a completely new set of teaching staff. They have contributed very effectively to a new team approach focused on setting high standards for students and using effective intervention strategies to support those students aged 16 to 18 who previously were most at risk of performing poorly. However, this strategy has not been so successful for the small number of students on the Access to Higher Education science course for adult students where weaknesses in the provision are still evident. A-level success rates in mathematics have been high for the last three years.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students and are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. This has a positive effect on students who are similarly aspirational about what they want to achieve, both at college and in their future careers. Students enjoy their lessons, as reflected in the much improved attendance and punctuality during 2013/14.
- Teachers plan lessons well and are confident in trying out new approaches to stimulate students' interest. They incorporate both theory teaching and practical experiments well in most lessons, so that students can clearly see how they should apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Students maintain their interest in complex and often challenging concepts and topics, knowing they will have to demonstrate their understanding of them in the latter part of the lesson. However, in some lessons, the activities are too numerous and cover the same learning points. Teachers use probing questions to check and develop students' understanding of key topics in most lessons, but sometimes ignore incorrect answers or do not use them as a strategy to promote greater understanding amongst the group as a whole.
- Students develop good practical skills. They demonstrate the ability to handle equipment and chemical solutions safely and confidently. The application of theory to practice is very evident through discussions between teachers and students. Teachers devise imaginative experiments which students can relate to their everyday lives. For example, in a biology lesson, students extracted DNA from a strawberry to improve their understanding of the theory of cell structures. However, lapses in students' concentration and minor amounts of disruptive behaviour slow the pace of learning in a small number of lessons.
- A-level mathematics students are extremely enthusiastic about their learning, with most of them intending to pursue the subject at university. They have strong algebraic skills and are confident in applying them to other areas of their courses, such as trigonometry and calculus.
- Teachers and managers use students' GCSE grades to set minimum target grades which they then review regularly, ensuring students are fully involved in any revisions to predicted grades. Students enjoy seeing how their grades for individual pieces of work influence their projected grades overall, and this motivates them to improve further. They take greater ownership of their work and are more interested in the progress they make. Teachers are vigilant in identifying any

underperforming students and implement effective strategies as a team to monitor these students across all the subjects they are studying.

- Standards of assessment are good. Teachers set students homework regularly and mark it promptly using the college’s online VLE. Feedback is constructive and helpful, making it clear to students how they can improve their work in future. Teachers use ILT confidently in lessons, utilising their skills to create a range of very helpful online learning resources which students use during lessons and in their own time.
- The development of students’ English skills in science lessons is good. Teachers emphasise the importance of the accurate use and meaning of terminology well and are quick to check that students are fully aware of how to spell words correctly, particularly when they are similar in pronunciation, for example ‘mitosis’ and ‘meiosis’. Students receive a lot of encouragement to develop their writing skills through taking notes in lessons and through good advice from teachers on essay construction, helping to prepare them for the world of work and/or progression to higher education.
- Students take part in visits to venues such as the Greenwich Observatory and the Science Museum in London to develop their wider appreciation of the subjects they are studying. However, staff do not always focus sufficiently in lessons and in assessed work on potential career paths or the applications of science and mathematics in business and industry.
- Advice, guidance and support for students are good. Students value highly the very good support they receive from teachers and managers responsible for the A-level provision. Improved guidance and more stringent rules on entry criteria have ensured students enrol on the right courses to suit their academic ability and future career aspirations. All courses offer support classes where students can work in small groups to improve their understanding of particular aspects of subjects.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well in science. Teachers ensure students regularly work in different groups on practical experiments so that they all experience different viewpoints and attitudes towards subjects such as the transplanting of human organs. Students cite the way in which they work together and the support they receive from their peers as particular strengths of these two subject areas and of the college more generally.

Building and construction

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in building and construction are good. Improvements in teaching and learning since the previous inspection have had less impact on success rates in building and construction than in other subject areas, as they have remained low and static over the last three years. However, the results of recent changes in the leadership and management of the subject area are clearly evident in the focus that enthusiastic teachers now have on honing their teaching skills, making learning a priority and on ensuring lessons are more interesting and participative for students. Students are now progressing well and developing good practical skills, with many achieving their qualifications in advance of the predicted completion date.
- Well qualified and experienced teachers ensure that students improve their craft skills and their appreciation of the different techniques used by various sectors of the building and construction trade. Teaching is interesting and purposeful, incorporating a wide range of well-planned learning activities that stimulate students’ interest and motivation to want to learn and to find out more about the subject. In the best lessons, teachers ask students detailed questions that skilfully draw out their full understanding of the topic concerned and which enable them to make links to previous learning. Teachers set students challenging tasks in practical lessons that prepare them very effectively for progression to higher level courses. For example, students on level 1 brickwork courses construct semi-circular arches, a task normally undertaken at level 2.

- Workshops are spacious and provide well-organised environments where students can work productively in an orderly fashion, using safe working practices. Standards of work are good. For example, students on electrical courses are able to bend conduit neatly and fix it to walls to a high professional standard. Brickwork students can construct cavity walls with neat weather-struck joints, and students in carpentry learn how to hang doors within tight industrial tolerance limits.
- In the best theory lessons, students work well together in small groups to learn from each other and to complete tasks that they enjoy and are highly relevant to their profession. For example, level 3 BTEC students act as quantity surveyors to produce window fitting schedules from building drawings. However, poor punctuality in a minority of lessons hinders students' progress and disrupts group activities.
- Initial assessment of students' mathematics and English skills prior to them enrolling is thorough and enables the college to place students on the right level of course, where their ability in these subjects will not hinder them from making good progress. Additional learning support staff work closely with teachers to provide students who have particular needs with very helpful assistance and to include them fully in lessons.
- Feedback during practical lessons improves students' practical skills, enables them to reflect on the standards of their work and helps them to make good progress. Students' written work on level 3 courses contains detailed and constructive comments from teachers on how to improve further and how they can achieve higher grades. Whilst the written feedback students receive on craft courses is generally helpful, a minority of teachers fail to give sufficiently detailed evaluations to extend students' knowledge and understanding.
- Students benefit from good English and mathematics lessons that help them develop essential employability skills and prepare them well for progression to employment and higher level courses. Teachers are adept at integrating English and mathematics with theory and practical lessons, making them relevant and interesting. For example, carpentry students calculate ratios so they can mark out the angles required for dovetail joints and students on bricklaying courses learn how to calculate the number of tiles required for an L-shaped room.
- All construction students benefit from teachers' skills in helping them to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar, particularly those for whom English is a second language. In one class, the teacher used ILT very effectively to present students with an interactive spelling quiz focusing on the spelling and meaning of technical words used on level 3 construction courses.
- Information, advice and guidance are good and support learning well. Students appreciate the regular support they receive from teachers, and all staff in the division to help them with personal and work-related issues. However, recently-introduced strategies such as 'concern clinics' have yet to improve students' attendance, which remains low.
- The promotion of equality and support for diversity are outstanding. Teachers plan imaginative activities which broaden students' awareness of different cultures and building techniques from around the world, as well as the needs of different types of customers. Carpentry students examine wood working joints used in Japanese temples, whilst those on plumbing courses learn the importance of placing hot taps on the left hand side of sinks so that visually impaired people are not at risk of burning themselves. Students work well together in diverse groups and show great respect for their peers. In one class, designed to broaden students' understanding of cultural diversity, students brought in items from home that they felt reflected their culture and/or religion. One student spoke eloquently and passionately about the wearing of chadarees in Afghanistan, whilst another talked about the importance of his religion to him and his family.

Visual and performing arts**16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in visual and performing arts are good. Since the last inspection, when this subject area was judged to be inadequate, significant improvements have taken place. The integration of further education arts courses with the college's higher education provision, known as the Croydon School of Art, has resulted in a much needed boost in both the image of the division and in the morale of staff. Success rates in the year following the previous inspection were low, but college data show in-year retention is high, and improving. Managers in the curriculum area have focused on supporting teachers to improve their teaching and students now make good progress relative to their starting points. Their participation in projects in the community and with other external agencies helps them develop good commercial and personal skills. Students also develop relevant technical skills, for example in pattern cutting in fashion lessons and mixing in music classes. Most students progress successfully to higher level courses internally at the college or to employment and higher education.
- Teachers have high expectations of students. Lessons take place in professional open plan workspaces and classrooms, also used by students on university degree programmes. The shared working areas result in the students on the college's further education courses becoming more aware of higher level work which, in turn, raises their aspirations. They also benefit through attending presentations to the higher education students by guest speakers from creative industries. Teachers encourage students to think about how they can present their work to industry standards, whilst also achieving the highest grades possible in their assessments.
- In the best practical lessons on level 1 and level 2 courses in both visual and performing arts, teachers are skilled at designing activities that build students' confidence and which allow students to experiment in order to explore their strengths and areas for development. Project work stimulates students' interest in different aspects of the arts and enables students to start to think about the areas in which they might like to develop specialist skills.
- Students on level 3 courses acquire good independent learning skills and value highly the opportunities allowed to them to develop their own individual, and often original, approaches to their work. They relish being able to discuss their work with teachers and their peers, which helps them become more articulate and to use subject-specific vocabulary fluently. For example, a student on a music course was able to explain clearly how he used different microphones to record songs from several decades, invoking musical effects popular at the time.
- Students benefit greatly from teachers who have worked in the creative industries and who are extremely adept at demonstrating how to develop particular skills to a professional standard. Teachers make their lessons exciting and energetic, which fire students' imaginations. They integrate theory with practice well so that students develop their underpinning knowledge of particular styles and techniques before attempting to demonstrate them in practical lessons. Students have individual areas within the open plan department which they can use to display their work and to reflect on, and develop, their ideas. This adds to the ambience of the department as a creative hub, allowing students to experiment in how they present their art visually. For example, one student on a level 3 course had explored synaesthesia through visualising musical scores using different colours and textures.
- In a small number of less successful lessons, teachers do not plan assessment activities sufficiently well to ensure that the more able students demonstrate the full range of their capabilities. The emphasis in these assignments is on the completion of routine tasks rather than on giving students the opportunity to investigate topics more widely. A minority of teachers miss opportunities to develop students' visual language skills in art and design lessons and to reinforce basic performance skills in performing arts classes. In these lessons, teachers focus too much on students' completion of qualifications rather than on the development of their skills.

- Students appreciate the good support they receive from teachers who know their students well. Teachers provide helpful, but appropriate, pressure and encouragement to ensure that students with a wide range of abilities have an equal chance of succeeding on their courses.
- Written feedback to students on their assessed work is clear and helpful. Teachers now monitor students' progress carefully and precisely, setting them appropriate interim targets. Students know what they need to do to improve their work and to achieve the grades of which they are capable. They value the feedback they receive from their peers in most lessons. A small minority of teachers are not sufficiently adept at using question and answer techniques to monitor students' progress in lessons.
- Teachers focus strongly on the good development of students' English skills in lessons. Most lesson plans contain clear references to specific literacy objectives which teachers ensure they meet through their teaching. Staff use studio walls to exhibit displays of technical terms and their meaning. Students quickly assimilate the use of specialist language in lessons. They make good use of art and design word books, which students can add to and personalise, to support the development of their written evaluations.
- Information, advice and guidance are timely and effective. Recruitment processes are good and improving on most courses, as reflected in the increased proportion of students retained on their courses during 2013/14. Students receive extensive advice on the full range of opportunities available to them when considering progression routes. The integration of further and higher education courses within the curriculum area, together with the increased emphasis on employment options across the college, has successfully raised students' awareness of progression routes.
- The promotion of equality and support for diversity are good. Students respect each other's views and are not afraid to discuss complex issues relating to people's differences and cultural backgrounds and beliefs with their peers in lessons. In a performing arts lesson, level 2 students worked from a challenging script to explore male and female stereotypes. Female students acted in male roles in a play to successfully explore assumptions about relationships between men and women.

ESOL (English for speakers of other languages)

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment for ESOL students are good. This is reflected in the significant and sustained improvement in success rates, which are now high. College data show that retention and attendance rates so far this year have also improved when compared with the same time last year. A large majority of students progress to higher level ESOL courses in the college or to other subject areas.
- Students are successful in achieving very useful additional qualifications alongside their ESOL course, for example in mathematics, computing and personal and social development, which prepare them well for further study or employment.
- Students develop good language skills and gain greater independence and confidence in the workplace and in their local communities as a result of studying at the college. For example, adult students learn to communicate more accurately and fluently verbally and in their writing which benefits them in gaining access to a wide range of local services, and in learning how to use a computer for the first time to word process formal letters and to write emails. Younger students improve their language and mathematics skills in preparation for progression to higher level courses.
- A minority of students are frequently late in arriving for lessons. They disrupt the start of classes for those who are present on time and regularly miss valuable information on the intended

learning outcomes in lessons as well as activities designed to recap on learning from previous classes.

- Students' standards of work are high and students make good progress from their starting points on courses. In a particularly good lesson, for example, young students developed their vocabulary and gained new knowledge about annual celebrations such as May Day, which took place during the week of the inspection. Adult students learn how to correct their own, and their peers', inaccurate use of grammatical tenses when writing or speaking. They learn to place stress and intonation patterns correctly when talking, and to improve their fluency and communication skills more generally.
- Skilled and experienced teachers set high expectations for students who are keen to learn new language skills. They use a range of creative and imaginative strategies to motivate students and to help them improve their understanding of the English language. For example, in one very successful lesson, the teacher devised an activity for students to describe shapes, space and measurements in preparation for their mathematics examinations by dividing them into pairs so that one student drew various shapes used in the construction of a bird house based solely on the verbal descriptions of their colleague.
- Teachers' planning to meet the needs of the majority of individual students is very detailed, enabling teachers to organise a wide range of activities and highly relevant learning resources for students of differing abilities to complete and to use. For example, students learn how to use language successfully to describe their local area before completing different types of surveys based on their language skills and making recommendations to improve local services and facilities.
- Students and staff use ILT effectively, particularly interactive whiteboards, to maintain interest in lessons and to improve knowledge and understanding of important language rules and concepts. Teachers present pictorial and visual images imaginatively to help entry level students understand the meaning of key vocabulary.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not always involve less confident students in discussions so that they remain passive and do not respond to the numerous questions directed at the whole group. Moreover, these teachers do not always spend sufficient time at the end of lesson checking students' learning and their achievement of the set learning outcomes.
- Students benefit from good initial and diagnostic assessment at the start of courses. Teachers use this detailed information to analyse students' pre-existing skills carefully and to create very useful student profiles. However, a small number of teachers do not make enough use of the individual learning targets arising from this process in lessons. A relatively new electronic system to set targets for students and to monitor their progress is starting to improve the tracking of students' achievements.
- Managers have worked hard to encourage teachers to improve their assessment processes and have introduced a more rigorous moderation procedure to develop the skills and expertise of teachers further. Teachers' verbal feedback to the majority of students in lessons is frequent and useful. However, the quality of written feedback given to students varies too much and is not always sufficiently clear.
- Students receive good guidance and support. They understand why they are on a particular level of course and the importance of improving their language skills to progress further, both at the college and in their personal lives, particularly regarding employment. They receive extensive personal and academic support which helps them both with their studies and to reflect on their own performance and their place in their wider community. For example, students developed a good understanding of social enterprise and the work of international charities during an enrichment lesson, whilst in a tutorial, young students debated a recent trip to a London museum and the lessons they had learnt about their behaviour on future trips.
- Students develop a good understanding of equality and diversity in ESOL lessons. Teachers make every effort to relate topics to students' diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences, drawing on examples from their local communities and their countries of origin. Teachers make good use of learning resources to reinforce positive perceptions of people's differences.

Business management and administration

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and current students are making good progress. However, although success rates are improving on most courses, they remain low and below national rates overall. The recent changes in leadership and management have had a positive effect on students' experiences in the classroom and on their outcomes. The majority of students progress to higher education to study marketing, finance or management degrees. Students develop good employability skills through working on meaningful live project briefs with prestigious companies such as Google and John Lewis. However, too few students currently take part in any sort of external work placement as part of their study programme.
- Teachers plan most lessons very effectively, using ILT particularly well to develop students' knowledge of the world of business. For example, students work independently and confidently on electronic accounting spreadsheets to complete cash flow forecasts accurately. They use their well-developed online research skills to analyse the product promotion strategies used by companies such as Cadbury's, Virgin and Vodafone in order to debate the importance of the psychology of colours in marketing campaigns. However, teachers in a small minority of lessons provide insufficient challenge and stretching activities to meet the needs and interests of the more able students.
- Teachers set students realistic, but challenging, targets for attendance, punctuality and assignments based on their track record, and this ensures most of them are on course to complete their study programmes successfully and on time. Students use the college's VLE, e-books and personal tracking systems to plan their study time effectively outside lessons. The careful use of a rewards system motivates students to extend their learning further and develops their self-motivation and competitiveness in an appropriate manner.
- Students work very well in groups, enabling them to develop their self-confidence, discussion and debating skills and team building abilities. In a very successful lesson, students worked collaboratively to complete particularly thorough risk assessments for a hospital, school and nursing home. They presented their findings in a style reminiscent of the 'Dragon's Den' television programme, demonstrating excellent presentation skills and responding well to challenging questions.
- Teachers use initial assessment accurately to ensure they enrol students on the right courses to suit their abilities and ambitions. Students with particular needs benefit from the early identification of their requirements which leads to the provision of well-targeted learning support. Students more generally receive good academic and personal support through regular tutorials. Focused reviews, workshops and individual directed study sessions all assist in helping students to understand more complex business concepts.
- Teachers update their industry-related skills annually through work placements in industry, which enable them to incorporate teaching about up-to-date business practices in their lessons. They actively promote professional work ethics and the importance of appropriate attire in the corporate world of work. Most teachers adhere to these high standards and students mirror their code of business behaviour. However, a small minority of staff do not always adopt a consistently professional manner in the way in which they communicate with students.
- Assessment feedback on students' written assignments is good. Students benefit from both online and face-to-face feedback, which clearly highlights the strengths in their work as well as the areas for improvement. Most teachers' commentaries also include helpful feedback on how students can improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teachers integrate the development of students' verbal and numerical skills well with the teaching of business subjects. Students develop good speaking and listening skills through

regular participation in discussions and debates on topics such as event planning, team building and entrepreneurship. Students in one lesson used persuasive language to describe the business world of the future by predicting more robotic technology, no currency and a depletion of the world's resources. Specialist vocabulary exercises are a regular feature of each lesson and improve students' understanding of specific business terms used in the business world.

- Information, advice and guidance for students are good. Teachers skilfully lead group and individual discussions on business pathways into employment and higher education. Students benefit from talks on the financing of higher education courses and visits to universities, which help them to prepare for the transition to further learning. A high proportion of students progress to higher education courses.
- The promotion of equality and support for diversity in lessons are good. Teachers stress the importance in lessons of promoting inclusion in all business activities and promulgate good examples of companies that exhibit best practice in raising awareness of equality and diversity in business environments. In a particularly good lesson on this topic, students debated the low percentage of female entrepreneurs in business, using detailed cultural and gender analyses. Students from different backgrounds work well together in lessons and show mutual respect for each other's differences.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. The Principal, supported fully by governors, managers and students, has set a clear and ambitious vision for the college which places the needs of students, employers and the local community at the heart of its work and culture. Leaders and managers at all levels communicate this vision to staff successfully and with great clarity. In turn, staff respond enthusiastically to the challenge of raising students' aspirations and helping students to achieve to their full potential.
- Governors are highly experienced, committed, professional and well informed. They challenge senior college managers well to explain reasons for any under performance and to justify the judgements they make about high performing areas of the college. Combined with careful scrutiny and monitoring of progress, this enables governors to play a crucial role in helping to drive up standards across most parts of the college. Their focused contacts with students and staff, as well as their close involvement in self-assessment, ensure they also gain first-hand experience of the views of everyone involved in college life. This helps them to determine the accuracy of judgements made by managers and leaders.
- The college has made very significant, and increasingly rapid, progress since the last inspection, whilst recognising that further improvement is necessary to ensure success rates exceed national rates at the end of the 2013/14 academic year. Senior managers are confident in their predictions of future success based on the strong quality improvement processes, which include rigorous performance management of staff. Staff at all levels understand clearly the college's priorities for improvement and are committed to raising students' aspirations and achievements. Managers have been relentless since the previous inspection in implementing sharply-focused actions that are improving performance progressively for all groups of students.
- Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced in their specialist subject areas, whether academic or vocational. A comprehensive programme of lesson observations combined with extensive support for teachers provided by advanced practitioners, and the very effective use of data systems to record students' individual progress, have led to clear improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have supported managers throughout the college fully to take on much greater responsibility for, and ownership of, students' progress and achievements. Sharply focused professional development activities have helped to build managers' confidence and skills, for example in being able to analyse data accurately to assess the progress made by students. All college staff carry out a period of annual commercial updating with companies; this results in a

greater understanding of employers' needs when recruiting students, and of current business practices when planning schemes of work and lessons.

- The college makes very good use of the frequent feedback it receives from a variety of sources to put in place actions that ensure improvements in performance. For example, managers gain valuable feedback from student representation at course meetings and through the college's student parliament. Other regular feedback events include 'lunch with the Principal', and the very successful 'Go Out and Listen' scheme, where individual students around the college give their responses on a single themed aspect of the provision to managers. The college responds quickly to all the feedback it receives. Consequently, students feel their voice has a real impact on improving the learning experience at the college.
- The college's involvement in working with, and improving, its surrounding communities is outstanding. A strong and on-going commitment to many local initiatives, which help people facing challenging personal circumstances, makes a highly valued contribution to local residents and enhances the reputation of the college. A significant majority of students across the college take part in voluntary work and contribute to events which not only help people with their immediate and most pressing problems, such as homelessness and a lack of food at Christmas time, but also bring them into contact with a learning environment again and the possibility of improving their lives on a more sustainable basis. Students develop a tremendous range of valuable skills from this work and are rightly proud of their contribution to their local communities.
- The college knows itself well. Self-assessment is inclusive, self-critical and accurate. Managers have successfully rectified the vast majority of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They monitor closely the impact of actions taken to improve performance in each area of the college. Rigorous scrutiny of performance data, detailed analyses of student feedback, and regular observations of teaching and learning support a carefully planned cycle of area meetings and curriculum reviews. The self-assessment process leads to thorough quality improvement planning which sets new and challenging targets for further improvements.
- Strategic and curriculum planning is very responsive to emerging local and national needs. Changes to the curriculum arise as a result of detailed labour market intelligence and an analysis of future employment opportunities for students. The college has recently established an employability hub within the college which is creating greater awareness of, and opportunities for, employment amongst both students and staff. The college has responded well to the introduction of study programmes, particularly in the way in which the development of students' English and mathematics skills has a strong emphasis in lessons. Staff are working increasingly with employers to establish good links through initiatives such as live briefs and internships, but too few students currently have access to external placements in the workplace.
- The college provides an inclusive and welcoming environment for students. Staff work hard to promote open and respectful discussion of equality and diversity issues through special events, lessons and tutorials, which have a very relevant focus on potential dangers facing students, and topical cultural issues, such as female genital mutilation. A comprehensive network of support staff provides excellent personal help to all students, including those who are very vulnerable, to overcome personal barriers to learning.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students fully, and arrangements for safeguarding more generally are good. Managers and staff promote safety and welfare very effectively and students feel safe and secure on college premises. Staff receive appropriate training to recognise and respond to any incidents of bullying and/or harassment. Similarly, the link governor for safeguarding has received relevant training for the role. Managers have very productive links with specialist support agencies and work with them in partnership to provide training for students and staff on issues such as domestic violence.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Croydon College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Nursing and dental health	2
Early years and playwork	2
Science	2
Mathematics and statistics	2
Building and construction	2
Performing arts	2
Visual arts	2
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	2
Administration	2
Business management	2

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 3,459							
	Part-time: 7,505							
Principal/CEO	Frances Wadsworth							
Date of previous inspection	December 2012							
Website address	www.croydon.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+
	553	115	490	207	1,020	921	16	830
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+		
	87	173	62	141	-	-		
Number of learners aged 14-16	43							
Full-time	3							
Part-time	40							
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"> ■ Learning Curve (JAA) Ltd ■ Marathon Sports Foundation Ltd ■ NCC Skills Ltd 							

Contextual information

Croydon College is a large general further education college located in the centre of Croydon in South London. Almost two thirds of its students are over 19 years of age. Croydon has the highest population of all the boroughs in London. It is a socio-economically diverse area, with some affluent parts of the borough contrasting vividly with other wards which are characterised by high levels of child poverty, low incomes, temporary accommodation and crime. The unemployment rate in 2013 was at the average for London as a whole, but above the national rate. The borough has a relatively weak skills base in the context of London as a whole, with just over 60% of the residents of working age qualified to NVQ level 3 or above. The main employers in Croydon are in public administration, education, health, finance and business services. Almost 40% of residents are from Black and minority ethnic heritage backgrounds. The number of pupils at schools in the borough attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Moore HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the Deputy Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all 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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