

# Colchester Institute

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>24–28 March 2014</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This college requires improvement because:

- Too many students, and apprentices, do not achieve their qualifications, and too many do not make sufficient progress in fulfilling their potential. Despite pockets of good practice, the quality of provision in most subject areas is not good enough.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good. In too many lessons, aspirations for what students can achieve are too low, the work is insufficiently demanding, particularly for more-able students, and a lack of urgency slows down learning.
- Leaders and managers have paid insufficient attention to helping teachers to reflect upon, and implement, the craft of good teaching so that they become accomplished educators as well as vocational experts.
- Leaders and managers have not done enough to raise the expectations of both staff and students. Neither staff nor students have been sufficiently ambitious in raising standards, and consequently mediocrity has permeated several key aspects of the college's work.
- In several areas of the college, managers and staff do not take enough pride in creating an attractive learning environment that motivates students.

#### This college has the following strengths:

- Students and apprentices benefit from receiving tuition from teachers and assessors who are experts in their vocations or trades and have credible and current industry-standard knowledge.
- Students who encounter significant barriers to learning receive very good personal and specialist support to help them to stay on their courses and achieve.
- The college's provision is particularly broad and provides good opportunities for learners from a wide geographical area, including those not in education, training or employment, to take courses that staff tailor well to meet both learners' needs and the demands of the local economies served by the college.
- Governors and leaders have steered the college well through a turbulent period, particularly in respect of financial challenges, and have recently determined clear strategic priorities focused on improving all the key aspects of students' experiences.

## Full report

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

- Improve the proportion of students and apprentices who achieve their qualifications and the progress that they make, through raising both teachers' and learners' expectations of what they can achieve. Make sure all staff ensure that students attend all lessons, complete their courses, and submit work that reflects their best possible efforts.
- Improve the impact of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - building on teachers' vocational expertise through effective training that helps them to become accomplished teachers. Develop teachers so that they reflect not just on their own performance, but also on the impact of their teaching on students' learning, and on students' achievements at the end of their courses
  - using quality assurance measures, including observations of teaching and training, to raise expectations of what constitutes good teaching further. Ensure that judgements on the effectiveness of teaching and training are based securely on the progress that students and apprentices make both in and out of lessons
  - identifying where teaching is not securing highly effective learning, working with teachers to identify the precise actions they need to take to improve, and monitoring more rigorously their progress in making improvements.
- Ensure that college and subject area managers at all levels develop, and implement, the skills to raise standards by using data and other information effectively to monitor all aspects of students' experience, and to intervene swiftly and effectively where teachers or students are underperforming.
- Improve the learning environment, both in the college's public areas and in many classrooms, by using available resources effectively to celebrate students' work and create displays that reflect the vocational identity of different subject areas.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
------------------------------	----------------------

- Over the last three years, the proportion of students on college-based courses who complete their courses and achieve their qualifications has risen gradually, but remains below the national average for similar colleges.
- Students' outcomes are good in a minority of subject areas. For example, in hospitality and catering, health and social care, and sport, students make good progress and the vast majority achieve their qualifications. However, in most other subject areas, too few students achieve their qualifications, and too many students do not fulfil their potential.
- On advanced-level vocational qualifications, too many students do not make the progress, or attain the grades, of which they are capable, and this reflects both teachers' and students' responsibility in settling for modest aspirations that see the achievement of qualifications as a sufficient end in itself. College managers have been slow to use value-added measures to promote greater ambition, but are beginning to make progress in establishing a more rigorous regime of target-setting and monitoring.
- Adult learners, around a quarter of students, achieve less well than students aged 16 to 18. Those from minority ethnic groups, a relatively small proportion of all students, are less likely to succeed than other students, although the gap between their attainment and that of White British students has narrowed significantly over the last three years. Students who need extra help with their studies achieve in line with the college average.

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has declined gradually over the last three years, and is slightly below national average. Apprentices' achievements, and the quality of provision, have been weaker in subcontracted provision compared with provision based at the college. Recent changes to the management of work-based learning are beginning to have an impact in tackling this discrepancy and ensuring that all apprentices have the same opportunity to achieve.
- A strong focus on helping students to improve their English and mathematics is beginning to have a beneficial impact on improving students' and apprentices' skills and in preparing them for employment. Students' achievements on functional skills qualifications have improved significantly, particularly in mathematics. However, not enough students who are capable of achieving a grade A\* to C in GCSE qualifications are taking courses in these qualifications, and not enough of those who sit GCSE examinations gain a high grade.
- College managers do not collect systematic data on students' destinations; consequently they do not have enough knowledge about the impact that the college is having on students' future lives. The destinations of around a third of students who completed their courses in 2012/13 were unknown, and where information is held it is often rather vague. While many students' lives are transformed by their achievements at the college, too much evidence on this is anecdotal rather than from rigorous collection and analysis of students' destinations.
- A minority of students produce work of a high standard and develop fluent practical and vocational skills. For example, hospitality and catering students create imaginative and carefully-designed dishes, and in engineering practical work in motor vehicle, including on motorcycles, is of a high standard. However, students' and apprentices' depth of theoretical understanding is often much less secure because of weaker theory teaching and teachers' lower expectations of students' abilities in this regard. Attendance at too many lessons is low, and procedures to tackle this are ineffective and inconsistently applied.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Requires improvement
---	----------------------

- The lower than average proportion of students and apprentices who complete their courses successfully reflects the judgement that teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The slow progress that many students make in comparison with their starting points indicates that staff and students are often content with mediocre, rather than ambitious, standards of work.
- Although the proportion of lessons that require improvement is too high, students benefit from good teaching in several subjects. In the better lessons, for example in hospitality and catering, teachers use their good subject knowledge and occupational expertise to enthuse students. In most lessons, students display good attitudes and learn productively. Practical teaching is often better than theory lessons.
- Too many lessons are dull and uninspiring and do not stretch and challenge all students. The limited range of activities and learning materials fails to excite or motivate learners. More significantly, too many students receive insufficient challenge in lessons or through effective target setting to realise their full potential, even in the stronger subject areas. The weaker teaching on apprenticeship programmes focuses too much on assessment and review rather than on learning.
- The college's observation of teaching and learning scheme has not had a significant impact on bringing about improvements. This is because observers over-grade too many lessons due to focusing too much on the teacher's performance rather than the extent of students' learning. Arrangements for supporting teachers who need extra help are not fully effective in improving the quality of lessons. The observation scheme does not currently cover observations of assessments and progress reviews in work-based learning.

- The most effective teachers make good use of learning resources to develop students' enthusiasm for learning. The college's virtual learning environment is an effective tool for promoting independent learning, but only a minority of students make good use of this resource. Several areas of the college, and many classrooms, are uncared for or shabby, and do not promote a vibrant learning environment, for example through displays.
- Students on study programmes are offered an appropriate range of enrichment activities to develop their readiness for work, as well as their personal and social skills, but not enough take advantage of these opportunities. The college does not provide work placements for most students on the study programme, and consequently students do not always develop skills to help them prepare for employment.
- The college's learner services team makes appropriate use of assessment to ensure that students enrol on a programme that meets their needs. Teachers use information on students' capabilities effectively to guide and support them. They identify additional needs well and plan support arrangements effectively. Apprentices receive an appropriate assessment of their skills at the start of their training that identifies their current levels of experience and learning.
- Teachers monitor students' progress on their main programme effectively through regular reviews. However, they do not use tutorials well to set targets that stretch students, especially for those studying at level 3. Targets in learning plans are insufficiently clear or challenging. Managers have recently introduced software for recording students' performance to set targets and to monitor progress. However, the extent to which individual staff in the different subject areas use this resource effectively to record progress against targets varies too much.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Most teachers provide constructive and helpful comments on students' work, although the quality of feedback varies considerably between subject areas. In a minority of subject areas, the use of peer feedback is good. The majority of students are aware of the progress they make and, where relevant, of their target grades. In a minority of cases, teachers and assessors do not provide sufficiently detailed or frequent comments on students' work to help them to improve.
- The development of students' English and mathematics skills requires further improvement. Most students on a full time programme follow appropriate courses of study in functional skills. However, the proportion of students studying for a GCSE in English or mathematics in addition to their main qualification is too low. Teachers identify and correct students' spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively in a minority of subject areas, but they do not do this consistently across the college.
- Information, advice and guidance arrangements are satisfactory. The college's learner services team provide a useful range of information about the programmes and opportunities available to ensure an effective induction. They also provide effective support for students requiring additional or specialist help to enable them to achieve. Students receive appropriate tutorial support, although a few students complain that tutorials are not always relevant to their needs.
- Teachers create an inclusive and positive learning environment and, in a minority of subject areas, they promote equality and diversity effectively during lessons. Students treat each other with respect and courtesy during sessions. The use of a standard set of questions on equalities in work-based learning fails to promote apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity sufficiently.

## Early years and playwork

### 16-19 study programmes

### 19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected in students' achievements which, although below average, are improving. Students develop adequate skills to progress into employment or onto higher-level courses. In 2013, a quarter of students working toward qualifications at level 3 secured a place at university.
- Teachers are well qualified and have good experience of working in the children's workforce as teachers, nurses and social workers. They draw on their expertise well to make learning relevant to students' future jobs. For example, students working towards qualifications at level 1 worked collaboratively with dental students to study what effect certain food groups have on the oral hygiene of babies, young children and teenagers. Visiting speakers contribute well by improving students' understanding of working across the wider children's workforce.
- In the better lessons, teachers provide a range of activities to enable students to draw on life experiences, work experience and employment to develop their knowledge and skills. In these lessons, students make good progress and develop good communication and thinking skills. Students develop a good understanding of vocational language used in the children's workforce. Students engaging in a debate about whether the United Kingdom should ban smacking of children developed their research skills to determine the views of politicians, other European countries and leading children's groups.
- In too many lessons, teachers provide no challenge. Students lose interest and make slow progress. Where teaching is weak, this is reflected in students' poor attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Too often, teachers do not use the available information on students when planning teaching to support those less-able and stretch the more-able.
- Teachers provide a good range of enrichment activities, including visits to local schools, forest schools and activity centres. Students working towards level 3 qualifications benefit from the opportunity to learn basic Spanish in advance of visiting Spain to undertake an internship in schools or childcare settings. Others have the opportunity to raise funds to visit Goa to work with orphans and street children, widening their understanding and experience of working with children around the world.
- Students who are not yet employed benefit from an adequate range of work experience monitored by a designated work-placement officer. This enables students to understand and experience the demands and challenges of working in childcare, although a minority of childcare providers do not reflect good practice.
- Teachers do not use technology sufficiently to promote and extend learning creatively. The development of the use of social media and on-line learning resources is at an early stage. Students do not benefit fully from learning to use interactive technology, such as smart boards, which childcare providers use regularly.
- Teachers do not always assess learning effectively. Assessed work contains insufficient corrections of spelling and grammatical errors. Students are not always clear on how to improve their work and achieve higher grades. In lessons, teachers do not always take advantage of opportunities to develop students' English and mathematics.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity adequately within and outside of lessons. Students have an understanding of the importance of providing an inclusive environment for children and their families in the diverse communities they both live and work within.

**Engineering**

**16-19 study programmes**  
**19+ Learning programmes**  
**Apprenticeships**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which reflects the low outcomes on a significant number of courses. In spite of a few high success rates in highly specialist engineering courses such as welding and motorcycle repair, success rates for college-based learning are around the national average. Apprenticeship success rates have declined and are now below national averages. A minority of subcontracted providers have performed very poorly. Managers have taken recent action to review contracts with the worst performing and to monitor the remainder more robustly.
- Teachers use their vocational expertise well in practical lessons to motivate and inspire students and provide interesting activities and tasks that challenge them to learn by doing, thinking and evaluating. They support students well in the development of their understanding of complex repair techniques. Students develop good personal and employability skills that improve their confidence, self-esteem and reliability.
- Too much teaching of theory is dull because teachers impart knowledge and information mechanically without allowing students to develop wider academic skills such as independent research and problem solving. Students on higher-level programmes do not have enough opportunity to extend their diagnostic or evaluative skills. Teachers rarely ask probing questions to confirm depth of understanding. In a minority of cases, teachers answer their own questions before students can provide a response.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers break learning down into bite-sized chunks and use a wide range of equipment, video clips and animations to bring theory to life. For example, in a lesson for motorcycle electronics, students made rapid connections between the science of electron flow and electronic ignition systems.
- Teachers do not always use the assessment of students' English and mathematics at the beginning of their time at college to identify the students' starting points, and those with weak English do not receive sufficient help to improve. However, students and apprentices develop their mathematics well. Students interpret worked drawings, manipulate formulae and work to high degrees of accuracy. Too few students take GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics when they have not achieved a grade C or higher.
- Assessment is fair and reliable. Staff plan assessment opportunities appropriately and they take place regularly. In workshop lessons, teachers are continually posing questions and setting problems for students to solve to promote high standards. For example, in a body repair lesson students took pride in their work and explained their work confidently, but self-critically.
- Following reviews and assessment apprentices receive detailed and accurate feedback on how they could improve their work. Staff do not correct spelling and grammatical errors in most students and apprentices' portfolios or other written work and nor do staff provide them with a glossary of key technical words. The apprentices' portfolios of evidence are well organised and contain significant amounts of written evidence. Assessors and students make good use of other assessment methods including workplace observations, witness testimony and photographs.
- Students and apprentices receive appropriate advice and guidance. Managers and staff have developed good arrangements and contacts with employers to help them find work, and a number move to employment during their full-time college course. Support for students and apprentices is good. They benefit from timely and effective interventions to help them overcome



barriers to learning. Staff are very good in tackling some difficult issues faced by students and apprentices.

- Good industrial standard resources support learning well at all sites. However, students working towards qualification at level 3 have insufficient vehicles with high-level technology to work on.
- Apprentices' understanding of issues around equality and diversity is underdeveloped because assessors use a standard list of questions in reviews that does not draw on what apprentices are actually doing. For example, staff did not prompt apprentices about to go to work overseas to consider potential cultural or linguistic differences in the workplace. In lessons, teachers take few opportunities to use students' personal or workplace experiences to develop customer care skills or to understand better the needs and sensitivities of culturally diverse industries and communities.

## Hospitality and catering

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications, which is above national average. Progression to higher-level courses and employment is high. Students are punctual and well presented for the start of practical lessons, although on occasions attendance at lessons is low. Students demonstrate safe working practices in kitchens and restaurants.
- Students develop their practical skills in up-to-date and well-resourced realistic training kitchens and restaurants. They work with purpose and confidence to cook and serve food of a high standard. Plasma screens project live footage of students working in the kitchens into the restaurant, which challenges all students to perform under the scrutiny of their customers. This prepares them well to meet the demands of the industry.
- Students at all levels approach complex dishes and menus with enthusiasm and confidence. They relish this challenge, asking teachers for the things that they should look out for at key stages in producing dishes. However, a minority of classroom-based lessons lack the same level of challenge, and teachers do not always use targets well to measure individual students' progress. Teachers miss opportunities to develop wider learning skills to support progression in a minority of lessons for students working towards qualifications at level 3.
- Knowledgeable and highly experienced teachers plan an extensive range of activities that widen students' understanding of the industry and add depth and breadth to the curriculum. For example, college students recently worked with Jamie Oliver to re-invent and prepare Colchester puddings for an episode in his television series promoting regional dishes. Competition work challenges students to meet the expectations of employers, food specialists and suppliers. Local chefs judge internal competitions and act as mentors to the winners, who progress to regional and national competitions.
- The college's virtual learning environment contains high-quality materials that students use to extend learning both inside and outside the classroom. Well-equipped kitchens and demonstration suites give students access to high-standard demonstrations from chef lecturers. Tutors use social media to share job vacancies with students and support progression in to employment. For example, as a result of this speedy communication one student was successfully interviewed online for a position in a hotel in Dubai.
- Most assessment is good. Students evaluate their own performance accurately in practical situations. They receive timely, constructive feedback on assignment. Checking of learning through questioning is usually good, but teachers do not always use it to check the understanding of all students. On occasion, more advanced students take insufficient

responsibility for checking that their assignment work meets assessment criteria before submitting it for formal assessment.

- Teachers know and support their students well. They keep parents and carers well informed of students' progress. Staff invite parents and carers to specialist evenings and dinners where they can experience the skills of those in their care.
- Effective recruitment procedures ensure that students are on the right programme to meet their needs and aspirations. An induction programme prepares them well for the demands of study and staff embed planning for the next stage in a student's career into lessons and tutorials well.
- Students, including those who have already achieved A\* to C grades in English and mathematics at GCSE, develop and extend their literacy, numeracy and communication skills through vocationally-relevant activities in functional skills lessons. Staff promote cultural diversity well through themed events and study visits, and students demonstrate respectful behaviour at all times.

## Visual and performing arts

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

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in students' poor achievements, particularly on courses for qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Managers have adapted the provision in response to the recent poor results, to tackle low enrolment and retention rates; these actions are having a positive impact. However, not enough teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers help students to develop adequate technical and practical skills on art and design, graphic communication, music and performing arts courses. They support and guide students to enable them to gain skills for progression, and a significant number of students progress to higher education.
- In the better lessons, which are in a minority, teachers use their expertise to create skilfully-devised projects that promote an exciting and creative learning environment in which students develop their ideas freely. Teachers promote effective collaborative learning between students; for example, in rigging sets in production arts, working in pairs in choreography, and installing an exhibition using visual flair in graphic communications.
- Where teaching is effective, students develop appropriate industry skills. For example, they carry out sound checks and play live performances well; build good stage marionettes; create sound effects for film; and make and prepare art exhibitions and photographic shoots. Students participate well and especially enjoy the practical elements of learning and the designing of artefacts and the application of art materials, and work is of a good standard.
- However, in the majority of lessons, teaching is unimaginative and lacks creativity; as a consequence, learning lacks depth and students do not fulfil their potential. Teachers develop learning tasks poorly, which hinders the vibrancy and vitality of lessons and this does not help in the motivation of students. Teachers do not always use questioning to deepen students' understanding and extend their creative skills. In visual arts, teachers do not consistently design tasks to support deeper investigation or to develop lines of enquiry.
- Assessment and feedback from teachers are encouraging and designed to be supportive. Feedback on marked work indicates areas for improvement, but arrangements for monitoring students' progress throughout their course are weak. The use of group critiques and peer assessment is good in the visual arts, and teachers used feedback from a live concert to explore in subsequent rehearsal how to improve song structures and live stage presentation. However,



in too many lessons teachers miss opportunities to encourage students to review their practical work and consider how they could improve.

- Good dance studios and band rehearsal rooms enhance learning well, but some accommodation in visual arts is tired and cramped. In music, software, equipment and accommodation do not meet current industry standards.
- Teachers do not employ technology effectively to enable students to create, record, manipulate and review art work and performances. In visual arts, students do not fully develop their use of technology to research and improve technical skills, many of which are crucial in creative industries. However, teachers use learning resources well in music technology and production arts.
- Staff enrich learning through providing good opportunities to participate in study trips, exhibitions and leading craft sessions for early years' groups. Music learners benefit from the college's independent record label through recording studio time and promotion of their music. However, few work placements are available with employers that provide sustained experience in industry, alongside professional artists, producers and performers.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunity to practise and improve their English and mathematics in lessons. The good practice seen in dance, for example, where students calculate budgets for performance costs, is not widespread.
- Students feel safe, valued and are able to express themselves as individuals, but the promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped. For example, in the visual arts reflection on cultural differences is inconsistent.

## Foundation English

### 16-19 study programmes

### 19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment on English functional skills and GCSE programmes require improvement, and this reflects the satisfactory achievements of students. Most students become more confident in their communication skills, and improve their creative writing and presentation skills. However, teaching does not stretch most students sufficiently to achieve their full potential, and a quarter of students do not attend their English lessons regularly.
- In the more effective lessons, students practise their English skills in meaningful life or work contexts and make good use of information and learning technology to stimulate their interest. Students work collaboratively through well-designed and interactive activities that stretch them sufficiently to the next level of learning and encourage effective teamwork. Students take copious notes, and timely support from their teachers and classroom assistants helps them to complete work to a high standard.
- In the less effective lessons, teachers do not encourage students sufficiently to participate, and they remain passive even when they are clearly able to contribute ideas. For example, a minority of teachers tend to answer their own questions or to read aloud texts themselves instead of encouraging students to do so. Learning materials and activities do not systematically match the various learning styles and needs of students, and as a result, they do not always produce English work at levels of which they are capable. For example, students working towards higher levels of learning do not sufficiently develop their own writing styles when preparing their presentations.
- The strong emphasis on using lesson time to develop effective examination-taking techniques often prevents sufficient time being available for students to practise all aspects of their English skills. Managers are currently reviewing this and they have substantive plans to provide more

guided learning hours for next year to allow students to have more time to practise their English skills in lessons.

- Assessment is adequate. Staff use students' starting points well to place them on the right level of course. Students have access to frequent controlled assessments and this boosts their confidence and understanding of the examination process and marking schemes.
- Setting targets with students and the checking of their progress are not consistent. Learning targets are often too broad and they do not always help students to focus on the specific language skills they most need to develop. Students receive frequent and encouraging feedback. However, teachers do not systematically check and correct spelling errors, poor punctuation, or the misuse of capital letters.
- The development of English on all vocational programmes is not sufficient. For example, errors in the use of language or spelling are not systematically checked in practical or theory lessons. Attendance at English functional skills and GCSE lessons is particularly low for creative arts and engineering students.
- Induction, information and guidance for students are adequate and progression routes provide clear pathways for students to continue to develop their English skills. However, not enough students who have not yet achieved a grade A\* to C at GCSE are taking this course.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well in lessons and provide a safe and friendly learning environment. They encourage students to discuss topical issues, such as racial discrimination in employment. However, staff do not always provide students with sufficient challenge to reach their full potential.

## Foundation mathematics

### 16-19 study programmes

### 19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. In recent years, success rates for functional skills qualifications have improved at all levels and in 2012/13 were above national averages at levels 1 and 2. However, they remain low for entry level 3, short courses and GCSE passes at grades A\* to C. Managers are taking well-considered actions to improve all aspects of the provision. However, attendance at lessons was poor during the inspection.
- In most lessons, teachers use their knowledge of the students well to offer a variety of activities that motivate them and extend their learning. Teachers plan well for the mixed levels of study within their groups. They develop students' confidence and self-belief in their mathematical skills. Students enjoy their lessons and make appropriate progress. For example, in a wood trades mathematics lesson, students developed and demonstrated their understanding of fractions and percentages through an imaginative game using matching cards as if they were dominoes.
- In less effective lessons, the pace of learning is too slow to engage students and they all work on the same task. Teachers provide insufficient challenge to ensure students make the progress of which they are capable. On a few occasions, those who have completed their work have nothing to do and a few become distracted. Questioning does not always involve all students; for example, those who are more confident answer questions straight away, leaving others with little opportunity to speak.
- Teachers relate mathematics well to students' vocational studies and to everyday life, for example in calculating percentage discounts in shopping or planning and estimating the cost of building works. Students in a 'Learning for Life and Work' class visited a 'virtual bank' set up in the classroom. Teachers in engineering integrate mathematics into their subjects well. However,

this is not consistent across the college; for example, staff are aware that the development of mathematical skills is not fully established for students on early years' courses.

- Teachers use the results of assessments of mathematical skills at the start of students' time at college well to allocate them to appropriate groups for their level of skill and plan suitable learning tasks. Students also use this information to develop their skills in the areas identified at assessment as needing improvement. Students on GCSE courses make frequent use of the virtual learning environment and websites recommended by their teachers to develop independent learning skills. However, this is not common practice.
- Assessment for foundation mathematics is not consistently good across the college. Teachers set extension tasks and graded questions for students in lessons for those taking qualifications at level 2 and GCSE which they complete at home, but not all students benefit from regular additional work. A minority of teachers give detailed feedback on students' marked work to help them improve, but others do not. Students know which skills they need to develop, but do not always have sufficiently specific or precise guidance to help them to take the next step.
- Students value the college's tutorial programme, which develops respect between students from different backgrounds and helps them to understand equality issues. Teachers incorporate suitable examples into their lessons, such as exploring statistics relating to equality. They are aware of the need to avoid stereotypes, for example by using images from different cultures when exploring facial symmetry.

## Business administration

### Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Overall success rates are around national averages. However, apprentices on advanced-level programmes do not do as well as those on intermediate programmes. The trend over the last three years has been downwards. The proportion of apprentices who complete their framework on time is slightly higher than the national average.
- Assessors and reviewers often have high expectations of their learners, who usually respond positively. Learners prepare fully for their assessor or review meetings, bringing a range of evidence to show they are meeting the standards for the award they are working towards. Learners are keen to improve in their job and to complete aspects of their apprenticeships to a high standard. Assessors are appropriately familiar with the standards needed for qualifications in areas such as estate agencies, and use them to provide good guidance to learners about how to collect and use a wide variety of evidence for assessment.
- The majority of apprentices are in permanent employment in estate agencies, solicitors, a defence company and housing repairs. Good links with these employers ensure that most take a full part in learners' reviews and in setting targets. In the better learning sessions, this engagement ensures that students develop skills and knowledge which the employer needs as well as those demanded by the apprenticeship framework. However, not all employers contribute in this way. Progression to employment and further study is good.
- While a minority of teachers and assessors are expert in using assessment to check and extend apprentices' learning, too many do not allow sufficient participation by apprentices and this restricts their learning. Practices between subcontractors vary too much, and sometimes assessors record too little on review documents. Managers are aware of these issues and they have taken steps to strengthen the team of subcontractors to ensure consistently good practice.
- Records of the assessment of apprentices at the start of their training vary, but staff use them to ensure apprentices are on the right programme and that they register for appropriate English and mathematics courses. Targets set at the start of training and at reviews are often too

vague. Assessors use few of the targets set at one review at the next to check apprentices' progress effectively.

- Internal verification is thorough and accurate. Observations and feedback to assessors are mostly accurate, and include suggestions for improvement. Procedures to ensure employers and apprentices understand safeguarding are good.
- Apprentices' work in portfolios is good. Apprentices in the better assessment sessions show a good grasp of business concepts such as marketing and promotion, giving feedback to colleagues and managing business meetings. In the better sessions, assessors routinely develop apprentices' English skills, especially spelling and punctuation. They do not regularly include the development of mathematics skills.
- Most apprentices receive good advice about the rigour of the course. However, staff do not inform a minority of adult learners sufficiently about the demands the course may place on their employment or the amount of time they will need to study. Advice about further study or employment is good.
- The development of apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity is not fully effective. Staff miss opportunities to relate equality and diversity to the workplace. Although all reviews have questions about equality and diversity, most are generic and reviewers do not relate questions to the particular employment sector. For example, a reviewer missed an opportunity to ask about how an estate agency should react if asked by a prospective property owner to restrict tenants to specific groups.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have not maintained the momentum to improve the college. They have not tackled successfully most of the areas for improvement from that inspection. Outcomes for learners and teaching, learning and assessment now require improvement. Governors and managers have been hampered in their efforts to improve the quality of provision by the need to remedy the college's significantly deteriorating financial position.
- The college is now beginning a new phase of its development and leaders and managers are making good progress in securing college finances. A new, and more cohesive, management structure, from the start of the academic year, and an acting Principal appointed in January of 2014, are beginning to create a more challenging, but supportive, culture for staff, where improving students' success is central. Leaders and managers are also improving the college's learning environment significantly. At the time of the inspection, work had started on a substantial programme of new building and improvement.
- Governors and managers promote their vision and plans for the college well. The key focus on preparing students for employment continues. A range of valuable partnerships, including those with local authorities, local and national employers and schools helps to enrich the range of courses and subjects and provide opportunities for new ones; for example the college's involvement with the 'Energising Harwich' project, through its energy skills centre.
- The college meets the needs of students and employers well through a good range of programmes across a wide geographical area. It makes a significant contribution to meeting the needs of unemployed young people who have not been engaged in education or training and adult students who are returning to learning. Apprenticeship provision is expanding significantly, but unfortunately, outcomes for apprentices are often low.
- The acting Principal is developing a more productive relationship between managers and staff. Aided by the Principal's promotion of the college's key priorities and the much-improved opportunities for communication with all levels of manager, staff understand the college's priorities better and feel part of its improvement agenda.

- The relatively new management arrangements are beginning to improve students' experiences, but they are not fully effective. Area heads and their teachers often speak positively about how their managers support them to improve students' experiences. However, a minority of teachers' current roles, tasks and expectations are unclear and confusing.
- Inconsistently effective subject area management is a reflection of the widely varying quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observations of teaching, learning and assessment tend to over-grade lessons. Action plans following observation often do not contain sufficient detail on how teachers can improve and managers do not follow up the plans fully. Management of teachers' performance is improving and teachers receive support to improve. However, the development of teachers overall, especially to help them to become more skilled in challenging and extending students' learning in lessons, requires improvement.
- The work of the curriculum and quality committee of the corporation is rigorous. Governors challenge managers effectively, and through detailed analysis of managers' reports and of data they have a good understanding of provision and what needs improving.
- Managers are not consistently implementing well the new quality-improvement arrangements. Not all subject area reviews are of good quality and while subject managers are making more use of students' data as part of quality analysis, not all do this well.
- The management of subcontracted providers and of apprenticeships has improved significantly recently. Managers have a good understanding of which providers are under-performing and have ended contracts where necessary.
- Managers have an appropriate and improving understanding of study programmes for students aged 16 to 18. They have a strong focus on helping students to improve their English and mathematics. Managers and staff are working to improve the quality of work experience and to provide this for all students.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is adequate. The extent to which teachers successfully build on opportunities, in lessons or assessments and reviews, to promote aspects of equality and diversity, varies considerably across subject areas. While governors and managers are aware of achievement gaps between different groups of students, analysis of the reasons for the gaps is insufficient and managers have not taken enough specific actions to close the gaps.
- Managers and staff manage and implement well the thorough safeguarding arrangements and they very usefully integrate these arrangements with the wider welfare of students and their complaints. Staff training is up to date. The single central register, recording the status of Disclosure and Barring Service checks for staff is comprehensive, although the checks for too many staff took place too long ago. Managers are urgently resolving this issue. Governors are fully involved and monitor arrangements thoroughly.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Colchester Institute


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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Early Years and Playwork</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Hospitality and Catering</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Performing Arts</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foundation English</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foundation mathematics</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>3</b>



## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	14+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 3,956							
	Part-time: 8,091							
<b>Acting Principal/CEO</b>	Alison Andreas							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	June 2011							
<b>Website address</b>	www.colchester.ac.uk							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	1,207	29	1,237	126	1,650	195	1	0
<b>Part-time</b>	195	881	70	1,849	28	357	6	32
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	634	700	278	560	0	13		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	327							
<b>Full-time</b>	21							
<b>Part-time</b>	306							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	31							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A14 training Services</li> <li>■ ABA Training</li> <li>■ Academy of Learning</li> <li>■ APC Plastering</li> <li>■ Career track (Tendring District Council)</li> <li>■ Catten College</li> <li>■ EASI Hairdressing</li> <li>■ The Equestrian Learning Academy</li> <li>■ Independent Windscreen Academy</li> <li>■ The Harwich Mayflower Project</li> <li>■ MEAT Ipswich</li> </ul>							

- 
- Pioneer Sailing Trust
  - ST Consortium
  - VLUK
  - WS Training Ltd

## Contextual information

Colchester Institute is a large general further education college serving North Essex and the surrounding areas. The main site is in Colchester, with smaller campuses in Braintree and Clacton-on-Sea. In addition to the main campuses, the college provides courses in other locations, including an Energy Skills Centre in Harwich. The college provides a wide range of vocational further education and training programmes. It also provides vocational higher-education programmes validated by the University of Essex. The college's growing apprenticeship provision is delivered both by the college itself and by a range of subcontractors. Educational achievement in Essex schools at age 16 is close to the national average. The vast majority of students are White British, reflecting the population of the area served by the college.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Alan Hinchliffe, Her Majesty's Inspector

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and nine additional inspectors, assisted by the acting principal and chief executive 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>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

