

# MidKent College

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		2–6 March 2015
<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 few students complete their qualifications successfully, particularly those aged 16 to 18 on study programmes
- the continuity of learning is often adversely affected by poor attendance and punctuality
- too few teaching, learning and assessment sessions are good or outstanding
- students do not achieve to their full potential; imprecise target-setting for a small number of students and insufficiently clear written feedback slow their progress
- teaching and learning in English and mathematics are poor, both in discrete lessons and when taught alongside students' main subjects
- leaders and managers do not use data on students' performance and progress well enough to evaluate outcomes and bring about improvements
- quality assurance procedures, including lesson observations and self-assessment, do not result in sufficiently rapid improvements in provision.

#### This college has the following strengths:

- teachers use their industry experience very effectively to develop students' practical skills and to instil in students the need for good behaviour and high standards of professional conduct
- managers and staff have a clear focus on developing students' employability skills in tutorials and through a wide range of imaginative and successful initiatives to promote the world of work
- learning support staff work well with teachers in lessons to provide good assistance to students most in need of additional help with their studies
- good partnerships with schools and employers enable staff to make the curriculum relevant to the needs of industry; students gain real-life experience of the workplace and a large number of school pupils benefit from being able to experience training in vocational settings at the college
- senior leaders' good financial management has enabled the college to make a significant investment in high-quality commercial resources and accommodation to the benefit of students.

## Full report

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

- Reinforce with students the importance of good attendance and the need to arrive at lessons on time as important employability skills. Ensure teachers set clear expectations regarding students' attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure teachers set students demanding work that is not too easy for them to complete. Use challenging targets and clear feedback in students' assessed work to make sure students know how to improve their performance further.
- Improve English and mathematics provision across the college by ensuring all teachers are sufficiently qualified in these subjects; better coordinate these subjects where they are taught in discrete lessons and when incorporated into vocational and academic lessons. Clarify responsibilities of staff in making sure students attend GCSE and functional skills lessons.
- Ensure that managers at all levels improve their skills in using a range of information, including published data, to evaluate students' overall progress and to intervene rapidly where performance is weaker.
- Review and reduce the range of quality assurance and self-assessment processes to focus more sharply on evaluating the quality of teaching over time and its relationship to students' progress and outcomes.
- Ensure that curriculum managers at all levels take responsibility, and are held accountable, for students' progress on all elements of their study programmes.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Three quarters of students at the college are aged 16 to 19, the majority of whom are on study programmes below level 2, and at levels 2 and 3. The numbers of both intermediate and advanced apprentices are increasing, but they make up only a small proportion of the college's student cohort. The highest numbers of enrolments are in health, public services and care, construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy and arts, media and publishing.</li> <li>▪ Prior to 2013/14, the proportion of students achieving their qualifications improved over a number of years and in line with national rates. However, success rates fell in 2013/14 and require improvement. They are particularly low for students aged 16 to 18 on study programmes at level 1, but have also declined in the past 12 months and require improvement at both levels 2 and 3. While retention remains high, too many young students failed to complete their qualifications. By contrast, success rates for the much smaller cohort of adults improved at all levels in 2013/14, most notably at level 2 where they are now high. However, they still require improvement overall.</li> <li>▪ Success rates in a small number of vocational subjects are high, most notably in health and social care, applied science, animal care and travel and tourism. However, too few students achieve their vocational qualifications in the majority of subjects. A-level provision forms a small part of the college's curriculum offer, but success rates on AS levels are very low, having declined significantly over the past two years. While the proportion of young students achieving their A-level qualification is at the high national rate, too few make the progress of which they are capable during their studies. Progression rates for AS-level students to the second year of A-level studies are low.</li> <li>▪ A much greater number of students took GCSEs and functional skills in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2 in 2013/14. Enrolments on GCSE courses in these subjects have quadrupled in 2014/15. The number of students who were successful in achieving GCSEs at grades A* to C in mathematics last year was very low. While significantly more students achieved high grades in</li> </ul>	

GCSE English than in 2012/13, success rates still require further improvement. Functional skills rates declined dramatically in 2013/14, and are very low for both younger students on study programmes and for adults, particularly those taking functional skills at level 2. The numbers of students gaining functional skills qualifications in mathematics at all levels are particularly low. Students' development of English and mathematics skills in vocational lessons is insufficient in too many subject areas and attendance at GCSE lessons, in particular, is poor.

- Students' attendance and punctuality require improvement. Attendance was poor in the majority of subject areas during the week of the inspection. Students do not arrive on time in a significant proportion of lessons. Managers recognise the need to improve attendance further as the rate of improvement is still too variable across curriculum areas. Students feel safe around the college and behave well, both in lessons and in public areas. They are courteous and contribute well to the lively atmosphere at both college sites, and particularly so in the foyer areas, where students enjoy taking part in exhibitions, competitions and a wide range of cross-college enrichment activities.
- The college has been partially successful in reducing any gaps in achievement that existed between different groups of students. Male students have performed worse than their female peers over the past three years, largely because of the poorer success rates in male-dominated subjects such as engineering and construction. Students identified as requiring additional learning support perform as well as their peers. Some small groups of students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve particularly well, most notably Black African students and those from the Indian and Pakistani communities. Other groups of students are less successful in achieving their qualifications, for example those from Black Caribbean backgrounds.
- Where students attend college regularly, the majority develop good practical skills and knowledge. Students from different subject areas are successful in competitions in recognition of their good skills development. For example, students in performing arts have progressed to the finals of a number of prestigious events, competitions and television programmes. The progress made by students in different vocational subjects is too variable and requires improvement. The majority of students on vocational courses at level 3 do not make the progress of which they are capable. While the achievement of high grades is good on health and social care and business management programmes at level 3, it is low on too many other courses.
- After fluctuating widely over the past three years, the numbers of students achieving an apprenticeship in the workplace are improving, though still variable. While the proportion of apprentices completing their qualifications in the planned timescale is now higher than for their peers nationally, managers recognise that apprenticeship success rates overall are still not high enough. They are high for adult apprentices and in curriculum areas such as engineering and administration; by contrast, success rates are low for apprentices aged 16 to 18 and in other subjects, for example motor vehicle and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The successful implementation of a traineeship programme has enabled the majority of students completing this training to progress to apprenticeships. A number of courses run by the six main subcontractors with whom the college works have very high success rates; the college has ceased provision in those which have performed less well.
- Initiatives to develop students' employability skills have been successful in exposing students to the world of work in a number of ways. These include the large volume of work-ready interviews carried out by employers and the introduction of the job shop, which has helped a considerable number of students to find work, many of them by enrolling on apprenticeships. Students from a wide range of subject areas develop their practical and employability skills well by contributing regularly to events held on college premises for the local community. Students in the majority of subjects take part in external work placements.
- Students attending college from special schools as part of their full-time education achieve successfully. The majority of these students progress to courses at the college or to further education elsewhere. Success rates for a small number of other vulnerable groups of students are low in a number of cases. Most of the large cohort of 14 to 16 year-old school pupils who attend courses at the college gain their qualifications and progress to full-time programmes.

- Staff have been partially successful in capturing data on destinations of students when they finish courses. Managers now know whether more students have a positive outcome in terms of their recorded destination than previously. However, the proportion of unknown destinations remains too high. Internal progression is good for students on courses at entry level and level 1, but requires improvement from programmes at level 2 to those at level 3 and above. Progression to higher education for those students on level 3 courses who apply through UCAS has improved over the past two years and is good, but the number of students entering higher education overall requires improvement.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The main aim of the college is to provide vocational courses that enable students, particularly those aged 16 to 18, to gain employment in the local area and to progress to higher-level courses, including higher education. A particular focus for staff is the need to prepare students to work in the many small- and medium-sized businesses that characterise the local and regional economy. The eight subject areas inspected and reported on represent a sample of the college's most significant provision. Inspectors evaluated study programmes for students aged 16 to 18 and foundation mathematics, reflecting government priorities.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not good enough to improve outcomes for all students. Too few teachers ensure that all students make rapid progress, or achieve their potential. Weaker teaching is characterised by students of differing abilities all working on the same task. More able students finish tasks quickly, find the work too easy and, as a consequence, do not achieve high grades. By contrast, less able students struggle to complete their work and frequently have to move on to learning about a new topic before they have fully understood the previous one. In a number of AS- and A-level lessons, teachers planned activities that were not demanding enough, so that students lost interest and failed to participate. During the inspection, much teaching that was good had less impact than it should, because of low attendance and poor punctuality.
- The teaching of English and mathematics in discrete courses requires rapid improvement. Functional skills lessons do not help students to develop the skills identified as lacking in diagnostic tests at the start of their courses. Teachers often fail to help students understand how English and mathematics are relevant to their vocational areas. They do not reinforce learning well enough and students therefore struggle to recall and apply concepts that they covered in previous lessons.
- Too few teachers are sufficiently skilled at reinforcing English and mathematics within their vocational areas. While activities at the start of lessons often focus on a particular aspect of English or mathematics, teachers do not explain to students why these skills are useful to them and students fail to understand the purpose of the activity. In better lessons, teachers ensure that students are confident in using relevant English and mathematics skills and topics. For example, in a media lesson, students worked accurately using comparative ratios for frame sizes to display articles and photographs on a magazine page. Most teachers reinforce the importance of correct spelling and use of subject-specific terminology and notation so that students use appropriate terms with confidence.
- Teachers' assessment of students' learning is of variable quality and requires improvement. The large majority of teachers use oral feedback well during lessons to tell students how they are progressing and what they can do to improve. They are skilled at using follow-up questions to ensure that students have understood the teaching and to generate interesting discussions. A small number of teachers too readily allow students not to respond to questions, rather than probing further to check what individual students do or do not know.
- The quality of written feedback on students' work requires improvement. Teachers' comments are frequently too vague for students to be able to pinpoint what aspects of their assignments they have to improve or how they will go about doing so. In a very small minority of subjects,

students struggle to understand how well they are doing because the work they do in class is not marked frequently enough.

- Where teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) effectively, for example by encouraging students to use blogs to monitor their progress and targets in computing lessons, this supports students' learning well. However, in a number of subject areas, teachers do not use ILT sufficiently well to enhance learning. Students' use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to increase their knowledge and interest is underdeveloped in most subjects.
- Teachers use their vocational expertise well to bring to lessons a wealth of experience that captures students' interest and motivates them to succeed. They set high standards of professional conduct that students are keen and quick to emulate. The majority of students develop good practical skills in high quality and well-resourced commercial environments at the college. In a small number of lessons, teachers do not clarify the links between theory and practice well enough.
- Students benefit from frequent one-to-one meetings with their course teachers and personal tutors. Teachers make good use of the extensive information about individual students' progress that is available to them. They monitor the progress that students are making in all aspects of their study programmes, with a particularly good emphasis on how well students are preparing for work or higher education. The college system allows teachers to see where the performance of individual students is below expected levels, enabling them to intervene swiftly to help students get back on track.
- Most targets that teachers set for students are challenging and well considered, particularly for students on courses at level 1 and below where teachers design targets that help students improve their attitudes to learning and gain the skills they need for work or higher levels of study. However, for a small number of students, targets are not set or are imprecise.
- Where teachers identify that students require extra support, they put in place effective and well-considered strategies to ensure they make the same progress as their peers. Teachers deploy learning support assistants very effectively in lessons and provide targeted help to individuals or groups as required. By involving the support assistants in the planning of lessons, teachers ensure that students gain maximum benefit from the expertise and contributions of all staff.
- Effective initial advice and guidance for 16- to 18-year-old students ensure they are on study programmes that match their career ambitions well, including their possible progression to higher education. Students gain confidence from knowing that they can improve their current skills levels through relevant and worthwhile work experience. They benefit further from the well-structured tutorial programme through which they gain a thorough understanding of topics relating to work-readiness, wellbeing and citizenship.
- Students demonstrate high levels of mutual respect in all their lessons. Teachers ensure that students learn to listen to, and value, the opinions of others. However, teachers do not always do enough to prepare students for the diverse communities in which they will live and work, particularly for those who may move away from the local area to live with people from different backgrounds to their own.

## Health, social care and early years

**16-19 study programmes**  
**19+ learning programmes**

Good

### Teaching, learning and assessment in health, social care and early years are good because:

- a very high proportion of health and social care students complete their qualifications successfully and produce work to a high standard, which they apply well to their chosen career in the care sector

- teachers in health and social care use their knowledge, skills and industry expertise well to ensure that students make good links between theory in the classroom and their experiences on work placements; for example, students in a health and social care lesson at level 2 used the bedroom set up in a classroom to identify risks and hazards they might find in a bedroom in a care establishment
- teachers, personal tutors and employability officers support students well in preparing for work placements, potential employment opportunities and further training; they help students to complete additional qualifications requested and valued by local employers, such as in dementia care, which further increase their employability
- lessons are imaginative, meet the needs of students with very different abilities and maintain high levels of motivation and interest in the topics being taught
- the majority of teachers have high expectations of students, who make good progress as a result in both lessons and work placements; students benefit from developing their skills further by acting on supportive and developmental oral feedback from teachers and employers
- links with employers are excellent, resulting in numerous work placements that are varied and give students opportunities to make informed decisions about their future careers; a number of employers visit lessons as guest speakers to enrich students' learning, for example community mental health teams, baby massage experts and governors from the local NHS trusts
- students develop confidence in assessing peers' work and producing well-written and thoughtful reports that also reinforce their own learning.

**Teaching, learning and assessment in health, social care and early years are not yet outstanding because:**

- teachers' written feedback on students' marked work lacks rigour and detail necessary for students to understand what they need to do to improve their assignments further and achieve higher grades
- teachers do not incorporate English and mathematics sufficiently well in vocational lessons to develop students' skills in these subjects; for example, the teacher in one lesson did not define, or spell, the terms used in a video, such as 'homeostasis', 'lactation' and 'cardiovascular disease', which meant students were not able to understand fully the topic being taught
- the use of 'appetiser' activities at the start of every lesson to develop students' English and mathematics skills fails to promote their interest in these subjects because students do not see the relevance, or value the purpose, of the activities.

**Building and construction**

**16-19 study programmes**  
**19+ learning programmes**

Requires improvement

**Teaching, learning and assessment in building and construction require improvement because:**

- too few students achieve their qualifications successfully; the proportion completing their main qualification has declined over the past three years and is now below the success rate of similar colleges
- students do not develop their employability skills sufficiently well; on the majority of courses, they do not have enough opportunities to interact with employers and study programmes lack sufficient work experience, trips and visits to help students develop a greater understanding of the industry
- the large majority of assessment workbooks lack constructive written feedback on how students can improve and develop their practical construction skills



- teachers do not make enough use of the high-quality resources available to them in lessons, including laptops and the VLE, to stimulate students’ interest in topics being taught
- target setting for students is weak in the large majority of practical and theory lessons; teachers do not challenge students sufficiently to fulfil their potential
- students’ poor attendance and lateness for lessons have a detrimental effect on both their learning and the continuity of activities for students already present in the class; teachers do not challenge students robustly about the reasons for their poor punctuality
- teachers fail to develop students’ English and mathematics skills sufficiently in both practical and theory lessons; in discrete functional skills classes, teachers do not link learning about English and mathematics to the trade area or to relevant technical terminology to help students see the relevance of these subjects.

**In building and construction the provider has the following strengths:**

- students who do attend lessons are well behaved, polite and respectful to their peers, teachers and support staff; they are well motivated, take their learning seriously and have aspirations to progress to higher-level programmes or apprenticeships
- the standards of practical and theory work produced by more able students are good, with the majority often producing work that exceeds awarding organisation standards; for example, in a plumbing lesson, students completed an exercise to make a copper pipe frame to a high standard, which developed their hand skills and problem-solving abilities well
- students benefit from working in spacious and well-resourced workshops, where they use high-quality industry standard tools and equipment replicating those that employers would expect them to use on a construction site
- teachers’ helpful oral feedback and effective support from technicians in practical lessons, help students achieve their full potential and develop their practical skills; in a brickwork lesson, the technician supported two students well in the outside area so they could build blockwork against steel uprights, while the teacher worked with other students in the indoor workshop.

<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	
<b>16-19 study programmes</b> <b>19+ learning programmes</b>	Good

**Teaching, learning and assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy are good because:**

- the majority of students complete their programmes of study successfully; they develop good practical skills, such as colour correction, facials and waxing, that meet and exceed industry standards
- teachers use motivational activities at the start of the lessons very effectively to stimulate students’ interest, encouraging very good behaviour; students recognise and value the support teachers provide to help them progress in lessons and tutorials
- students benefit from significant employer involvement in the curriculum so it is highly relevant and sets high standards for students; participation in national competition work enhances their work-ready skills, and one student has been awarded the title of ‘British men’s hairdresser of the year’
- students use very high-quality resources to support the development of wider employability skills; they have access to good quality work experience in college and during work placements with local salons
- students benefit from frequent assessment of their learning, supported by helpful oral feedback, which ensures they make rapid progress in gaining skills and knowledge in lessons; for example, students on hair and beauty courses at level 1 use their knowledge of anatomy to plan skin

cleansing, and hairdressing students on programmes at level 2 have advanced quickly to cutting men's hair, extending their knowledge and skills

- teachers ensure students use correct technical language and good English and practise their mathematics in both theory and practical lessons, reinforcing the importance of these skills as an important part of their future careers; for example, in teaching colour correction and cutting techniques teachers make frequent references to the use of percentages, volumes and ratios
- teachers use tutorials well to prepare students very effectively for interviews, ensuring they are well informed about employers' expectations and the important personal presentation and customer service skills that support moving into employment.

**Teaching, learning and assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy are not yet outstanding because:**

- continuity of learning is adversely affected by poor attendance and students' late arrival in a significant minority of lessons
- teachers do not always use the links between, and information arising from, initial and diagnostic assessment to plan learning which meets the needs of all students; this results in less able students receiving insufficient academic support and more able students' pace of learning being slowed
- teachers' written feedback on assessments of students' practical tasks focuses too much on describing activities, instead of identifying actions to help students progress more quickly in the future.

**Hospitality and catering**

**16-19 study programmes**  
**19+ learning programmes**

Requires improvement

**Teaching, learning and assessment in hospitality and catering require improvement because:**

- the proportion of students aged 16 to 18 who successfully complete their qualifications on courses at levels 1 and 2 is low, and declining
- the majority of teachers do not extend the learning for more able students; for example, in one practical lesson, those students who finished making dough had to wait for others to finish before they could move on to the next task, but were given nothing to do
- teachers do not promote and reinforce good standards of food safety; for example, in practical cookery lessons, risks of cross contamination are not reduced sufficiently well and students do not routinely cover jewellery they are wearing; in one lesson, templates for cutting shapes made from a cardboard box were placed directly on dough during a teacher's demonstration
- teachers do not set students sufficiently clear and challenging targets so that they are aware of what they need to do to improve their work and skills
- teachers do not incorporate English and mathematics teaching enough in theory and practical lessons to help students develop these essential skills; for example, in a nutrition theory lesson, when discussing recommended daily allowances, the teacher did not ensure the students were able to calculate the percentages of different nutrients in foods.

**In hospitality and catering the provider has the following strengths:**

- success rates for the small number of students on professional cookery programmes at level 3 are outstanding and a minority of more able students have good cookery skills; for example, they make, and knead, dough quickly and to a high standard



- students attending the Medway campus benefit from using high-quality resources; they work in a modern commercial restaurant and kitchen and develop their confidence well, working quickly whilst using mobile electronic keypads to take customer orders
- teachers use links with employers and other hospitality networks very effectively to arrange visits and external speakers, which broaden students' experiences of the diverse nature of the catering industry; for example, visiting speakers demonstrate butchery skills using game and a whole pig carcass, improving students' understanding of the origins of different cuts of meat
- learning support assistants provide helpful guidance and discreet prompts in lessons for students with additional learning needs; students benefit from this support, which helps them to stay focused and to make meaningful contributions to group discussions
- students use ILT well in the majority of theory lessons to help them develop their independent learning and research skills; for example, students apply themselves seriously to using internet sites to identify nutrients and learn about their importance in diets.

## Visual and performing arts

16-19 study programmes  
19+ learning programmes

Good

### Teaching, learning and assessment in visual and performing arts are good because:

- excellent accommodation and specialist resources, including immediate access for students to lap-top computers, fully support and encourage good teaching and learning; students value and respect their high-quality learning environment
- standards of students' work are frequently good, and sometimes very good; music students have successfully reached the final stages of high-profile television talent shows; similarly, art and design students have achieved much success in national competitions
- teachers use their industry experience well in order to highlight the demands of the different professions and careers available to students; they make particularly good use of activities and assignments that deliberately focus on the skills and needs of employers; the majority of teachers insist that students mirror, and adhere to, the demands of current industry practice, particularly in dance
- lessons are lively and exciting, with teachers ensuring that all students participate
- teachers reinforce the need to complete difficult tasks within timescales that would be expected in a commercial setting; in a lesson on life-drawing, for example, students had to spend five minutes using their 'wrong' hand as an aid to liberating their own drawing techniques
- teachers use technology very well to monitor students' progress and to enable them to assess their own work in lessons immediately; for example, in a dance lesson, the teacher filmed the students' choreography to the song 'Fame', and quickly uploaded and played the recording so they could view their performances and see how to improve
- teachers use peer assessment strategies effectively during rehearsals so that students who are not performing at a particular point in the lesson are still involved and required to make, and convey, clear judgements about the practical work they observe
- students benefit from good work-related opportunities to develop and practise their employability skills; for their final performance in musical theatre, students become members of a production company that replicates industry practice and includes the use of an industry professional to direct their work
- progression to prestigious higher education institutions is good; students gain relevant employment, many with well-known and highly reputable companies.

### Teaching, learning and assessment in visual and performing arts are not yet outstanding because:

- too few students complete their qualifications successfully, although the proportion is improving, particularly in music
- collaborative learning activities are undermined by poor attendance and punctuality in a significant minority of lessons; teachers do not always challenge students' lateness in a way that will ensure they are punctual in future.

<b>Foundation mathematics</b>  <b>16-19 study programmes</b> <b>19+ learning programmes</b>	Inadequate
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**Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation mathematics are inadequate because:**

- too few students studying functional skills mathematics achieve their qualifications and the number of GCSE students achieving grades at A\* to C is similarly low; students do not make enough progress in lessons and teachers do not adequately identify and monitor those most at risk of not achieving
- teachers do not use the results of initial and diagnostic assessment effectively to meet students' individual needs; the large majority of lessons are aimed at the whole class so some students find the work too easy, while others struggle to keep up with the topic taught
- students' attendance in the large majority of lessons is poor; mathematics teachers do not take sufficient responsibility for improving attendance, and actions taken by colleagues to ensure more students attend these classes are having little impact
- teachers do not provide written feedback on assessed work for functional skills students that identifies what they need to do to improve; as a result, students are not able to correct their work and they make slow progress
- the development of students' spoken and written English skills is poor; teachers do not always correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in students' work
- teachers do not set enough homework for students to consolidate and extend their learning
- teachers do not use examples that students can relate to their vocational studies; students do not develop skills in mathematics or understanding of technical terminology that they can use and practise in their main subject area
- teachers do not use ILT and other interactive resources effectively to enhance learning in functional mathematics lessons; students do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers for research or to access online resources that would help them improve their mathematics skills.

**Foundation mathematics has the following strengths:**

- learning support staff are usefully deployed to help students with additional needs to make good progress in lessons; for example, students with behavioural needs in one class received very good support to help them work out areas of shapes
- GCSE teachers use imaginative resources to enliven learning; for example, one teacher used different types of fruit to represent values in algebra with the result that students clearly enjoyed the lesson and demonstrated a good understanding of the topic being taught
- the majority of students are currently making good progress in GCSE lessons.

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	Requires improvement
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- The Chief Executive Officer, governors and the acting Principal have positioned the college well to face future challenges, following a difficult year punctuated by personal tragedy. Prudent

financial management and with highly effective commercial diversification through which a third of college income is generated, have enabled significant investment in buildings, resources and staff development, to the benefit of students. Plans to cope with financial pressures, to diversify further, and to focus the college on preparing students for future employment are well judged. Despite these strengths in financial and strategic management, students' outcomes declined in 2013/14, teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, and provision in foundation mathematics is inadequate.

- Governors, who have particularly strong business and financial expertise, monitor the college's performance carefully. They have rightly sought explanations for the dip in performance in 2013/14. Although the reports that governors receive from leaders and managers are broadly accurate, they do not always contain sufficient analysis of key indicators. For example, governors have not been made fully aware of the need for younger students to fulfil successfully all the requirements of study programmes, and performance reports do not contain clear information on the relationship between students' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. Governors have developed useful links, both formal and informal, with faculties within the college, and use these well to listen to staff and students. Student representatives on the governing body are articulate and influential.
- Faculty Directors have a clear understanding of their critical role in raising standards and shaping the curriculum to meet employer needs but, despite their ability, struggle to intervene quickly enough to tackle weaker performance. The abilities of the curriculum managers who report to Faculty Directors are mixed, with several yet to acquire requisite management skills.
- Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive, but, in key respects, lack focus on students' progress and performance. Evaluation of performance data requires improvement. Partly because of a recent restructure, leaders and governors find it difficult to have a clear view of students' performance on study programmes and in subject areas. Published data on performance are not used well to bring clarity to college managers' judgements.
- Course reviews, which underpin faculty self-assessment reports, too often lack critical evaluation of students' outcomes, and many are incomplete. Evaluation of teaching and learning relies too much on lesson observation reports and not on a sufficiently wide range of evidence on the impact of teaching over time. Because of these weaknesses, managers do not make best use of success, progress, or attendance data to inform self-assessment at all levels. Detailed progress reviews held periodically in each faculty provide more depth.
- Appraisals of teachers' performance, both through formal reviews and lesson observations, give insufficient weight to their students' outcomes. A significant minority of judgements from lesson observations are over-generous, hindering teachers' opportunities to improve. Where areas for improvement for teachers are identified, training and coaching usually helps them to improve.
- The management of apprenticeship provision has improved, arrangements for checking the quality of subcontracted provision are thorough and effective, and partnership provision is terminated where the college's expectations are not met. Managers have implemented traineeships effectively, with high progression from these programmes to apprenticeships or into work.
- Leaders and managers focus well on developing a curriculum that aligns to the employment needs in Medway and Kent. Senior leaders have developed strong links with a number of key partners in the complex regional landscape straddled by the college, including local councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Chambers of Commerce, and regional and local employers. Employers are increasingly involved in curriculum planning, they provide valuable advice on curriculum design, and resources in many subjects, for example hairdressing, health care, hospitality, and performing arts. Faculty curriculum plans focus well on maximising students' opportunities to move straight into employment; further work is needed to assess the extent to which students' destinations at the end of their courses match their intentions at the start.
- Students aged 14 to 19 at risk of not being in employment, education or training receive good support to re-engage and plan for their next steps. Full-time students on study programmes benefit from a good range of external work experience, and a wide variety of work-related

activities and events within the college help students to prepare for employment or further training. Too few students are successful in meeting the mathematics and English requirements of their study programmes, and for some, this restricts their options.

- College leaders are aware of a number of small, but persistent, gaps in achievement between different groups. Managers are less clear about how to tackle such gaps. Across the college, an atmosphere of mutual respect and consideration is evident, and numerous events and displays encourage students to understand social, cultural and sexual differences. Teachers are less adept at using lessons to prepare students to live and work in a diverse community.
- Arrangements for safeguarding students are good. Staff are trained well to recognise most risks to students, and managers with specific responsibilities for keeping students safe are skilled and thorough in monitoring any problems. Links with external agencies are good. Security personnel, staff and students combine very effectively to provide a safe and welcoming environment for each other. Safeguarding leaders have developed plans to raise awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism through the Prevent agenda, although staff and students have not yet had comprehensive training on this subject.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### MidKent College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2
Building and construction	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Hospitality and catering	3
Performing arts	2
Visual arts	2
Foundation mathematics	4

## 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>	7,032							
<b>Acting Principal/CEO</b>	Simon Cook/Stephen Grix							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2009							
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.midkent.ac.uk">www.midkent.ac.uk</a>							
<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+
	749	424	1,581	734	2,100	503	6	17
<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+		
	194	130	134	164	2	8		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	60		9		69			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	253							
<b>Full-time</b>	5							
<b>Part-time</b>	248							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	-							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	-							
<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>■ Carillion Construction Ltd</li> <li>■ Charlton Athletic Community Trust</li> <li>■ CXK Ltd</li> <li>■ Kent County Football Association Ltd</li> <li>■ Maidstone United (Ground) Ltd</li> <li>■ Medway Youth Trust</li> </ul>							



## Contextual information

Mid Kent College is a large general further education college with two main sites. The campus in Gillingham serves the towns in the unitary authority of Medway. The second campus is situated in Maidstone, the county town of Kent. Both sites serve areas of deprivation and prosperity. The number of pupils at schools in Kent and in the Medway towns achieving five GCSEs is well above the national average. Just under half of the residents in employment in Maidstone and in the Medway towns have jobs in the public administration, education, health, and finance and business sectors. However, unemployment is above both regional and national averages in the Gillingham area. The proportions of people of working age in the Medway towns with qualifications at level 1 to level 4 are below regional and national averages, as are average earnings.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Richard Moore HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the Acting 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 past 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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