

Inspection dates	10–13 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Require improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Success rates in a significant minority of GCE AS and GCSE subjects are too low.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to learners to ensure they make good progress.
- Attendance and punctuality are too low in a minority of lessons and tutorials.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good across the college. Pockets of weaker practice persist.
- The progress of all learners is not yet consistently tracked using the new computer-based system.
- The college is under significant financial constraints.

The provider has the following strengths

- Current learners are making much better progress than cohorts in earlier years.
- The work with learners with learning difficulties and high needs is of high quality.
- Standards and quality of the rapidly expanding apprenticeship provision, adult provision and the subcontracted work with adults are good.
- Learners receive good careers advice and support with any welfare problems.
- The range of enrichment activities is wide and many learners benefit by taking part in them.
- The change in culture instigated by senior leaders is creating a motivated workforce and leading to some significant improvements in learners' experiences and success in many areas of the college.
- Learners are courteous, well behaved and make a good contribution to the life of the college.
- Managers have strengthened links with employers, providing a more responsive curriculum for the local area.
- Managers make good use of learner voice to inform planning and guide improvements.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Richmond upon Thames is a large general further education college based in the London Borough of Richmond. It offers a wide range of study programmes for 16–19-year-olds and has greatly extended its adult provision and its apprenticeship work since the previous inspection. It works with two subcontractors to deliver a range of ESOL, literacy and numeracy courses to around 800 learners in other London boroughs. It recruits learners from a very wide area including 28 London boroughs.
- This is the college's third inspection in three years. At the previous inspection there was little evidence of any real improvement. Since August 2014, a new Principal has appointed a new senior leadership team, recruited many new governors and a substantial number of new middle managers. Improvements are now evident, but more are needed if this college is to be judged to be consistently good.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all lesson observations and other performance management approaches result in clear and practical action points that teachers implement to support them in improving their practice.
- Share good teaching practice across the college, including the effective use of information learning technology (ILT), to improve learning.
- Introduce a system to measure the progress and achievements of learners compared to their prior results. Train staff to use this 'value added' system to ensure that all learners are working at a high level and making good or better progress towards achieving their full potential in their assessments. Ensure that learners' progress is monitored and supported regularly and effectively.
- Spread the successful strategies that are leading to improved attendance and punctuality to the remaining pockets of weaker practice that persist.
- Include group tutorials in the lesson observation scheme to identify and spread good practice across all personal tutors to help them provide even more effective support for their learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection, but the lack of consistently good performance across the whole college means that further improvement is needed. The new Principal and senior leadership team have assiduously identified the underlying reasons for the college's long-standing underperformance. They have addressed some of these successfully and are implementing sensible and achievable improvement strategies to address the remaining weaknesses. These will take time to come to full fruition, but most of them are starting to have measurable impacts.
- The quality of teaching has improved. A great many more learners who successfully completed their courses in 2015 achieved grades that they would be expected to achieve than in previous years. Quality and standards have improved very well in adult provision and apprenticeship work. Learners' attendance at lessons has risen and more of them arrive on time and ready to learn. Current learners are making at least adequate and sometimes better progress in their studies. They are well behaved and well supported, and the college is a harmonious community. Teachers and managers use data more effectively to track learners' progress and there are more and speedier interventions to help those learners who fall behind with their work.
- None of these improvements is complete and there remain some substantial areas where improvements are proving harder to achieve. For example, attendance has risen, but during the inspection attendance at vocational lessons and tutorials was often too low. Pockets of weaker teaching remain to be addressed successfully before teaching can be judged to be good overall. Success rates on a number of GCE AS and GCSE courses are low and have yet to rise significantly.
- The college has inadequate financial health. However, the managers and governors are working to improve the college's financial stability and sustainability.
- Since the previous inspection, there is a much firmer overview and management of the quality of teaching. The new approach provides informative and reliable judgements on standards of teaching, learning and assessment that provide a sound basis on which to make improvements. A minority of reports from lesson observers do not make it clear enough how well learners are learning in lessons.
- Performance management has improved and now combines the outcomes from lesson observation and a formal regular appraisal interview to inform the development needs of staff. Significant changes to staffing have taken place as a result of this scheme. However, not all the actions agreed to improve teaching are sufficiently precise to ensure improvement.
- Self-assessment processes are thorough, based on sound data and give high importance to learners' views, which are gathered and analysed effectively. The resulting report in 2015 is a comprehensive and accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. It is a great improvement on the report produced in 2014. Subcontracted provision is managed and monitored well. Course reviews lead to specific improvement plans that are usually implemented well.
- The college's course offer is changing to reflect local and regional priorities, including those of Richmond borough and the wider London economy. For example, the college works well with the Local Enterprise Partnership to meet local and regional skills priorities in business, engineering and construction, sciences, and sport fitness and exercise, as well as the needs of the preponderance of small businesses in the locality.
- Improvements to apprenticeship work and adult provision have been rapid and this provision is now good. However, managers have been too slow to bring about sufficient improvements to the substantial study programme that forms the bulk of the college's provision. Improvements are becoming evident, including the better progress of current learners and a much better approach to organising the timetables to include English and mathematics lessons.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well across the college, a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Cross-college events, induction and teachers' work in lessons help develop learners' understanding and tolerance of diverse cultures.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Around half of the governors are new to the board since the last inspection. They bring a wide range of relevant business and commercial expertise to the board. They use their expertise well to support and provide critical challenge to senior leaders.
 - Since the last inspection, governors meet more frequently and receive high-quality reports based on accurate data. They visit lessons and have a good understanding of what the college does well and what it needs to do to improve.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- The college provides a safe and welcoming environment. Managers keep accurate records regarding safeguarding and maintain good links with specialist external agencies to protect vulnerable and at-risk learners.
- Appropriate policies are in place covering safer recruitment practices, and appropriate checks are made on all staff including volunteers, contractors and governors. There are accurate records of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on the single central register.
- Staff have established a safe environment for learners. They feel safe while in the college and when online.
- All staff receive compulsory training in safeguarding and their knowledge has been extended through the completion of 'Prevent' training. A detailed 'Prevent' action plan and a recently developed external speakers' policy ensure that risk to learners is appropriately managed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality and effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection but, as managers identify clearly in the self-assessment report, some key weaknesses persist and require further action to improve. The impact of managers' improvement actions in this area, including extensive staff training, has not always been as great or as widespread as planned. Managers have reviewed and refined the improvement strategy and implemented further improvement actions recently, the impacts of which are beginning to become evident.
- On adult learning programmes the teaching by specialist teachers is good, and most learners make good progress. Assessment for apprentices is timely and constructive, with close involvement by employers to support each apprentice in achieving their learning goals.
- Teaching, learning and assessment on GCE A- and AS-level programmes have improved and are now predominantly good, as they are on International Baccalaureate programmes; learners' attendance at these sessions in the current academic year has also improved and is now mostly good. These sessions are often lively and engaging, involving stimulating discussions and group work. The best sessions frequently use interactive learning technologies very effectively to incorporate text, audio, video and online quizzes into the mix of teaching and learning. Learners learn well and make good progress.
- Teaching and learning are less effective in GCSE and some functional skills sessions, where learners' attendance during the inspection was too low. An improvement in learners' attendance at their lessons is evident from the college's data this term. It shows an improving picture of attendance for GCE A and AS levels and GCSE programmes.
- Lesson planning and the content of schemes of work have generally improved. Good use of interactive learning technologies is becoming more widespread. Most teachers give clear, constructive written and verbal feedback to help learners improve their work.
- In a minority of sessions persistent weaknesses remain. These include a lack of stretch and challenge, insufficient planning for individualised learning, too much teaching which is pedestrian, insufficient links to exam criteria and a lack of prompt support by teachers for learners who are falling behind.
- The development of all learners' English and mathematic skills during lessons does not, in most cases, involve sufficient practical focus. Teachers do not systematically check learners' spelling and calculations. Learners who already have a grade A* to C in English and/or mathematics are not supported well to improve their skills in these subjects further.
- The quality and effectiveness of the tutorial system is not consistently good. Personal tutors provide good support, but there is too much variation in how well learners are helped to develop their study and employability skills. Personal tutors have recently received appropriate training designed to improve their practice, but it is too early to see the impact of this training.
- Tutorial and teaching staff are beginning to make good use of a new online monitoring system to monitor and track learners' progress. Learners have good access to the system using their mobile phones, including sending and receiving messages from teaching staff. The system has very recently been extended for access by parents. This highly interactive monitoring system provides a very wide range of up-to-date information on, and for, each learner and is increasingly improving the ways in which teachers, tutors and learners communicate and improve progress.
- Equality and diversity are promoted very well by teachers during lessons and reviews. Learners' awareness and understanding of a wide range of historical aspects, for example the impact of emancipation and emergence of feminism, is good. They have a good understanding of aspects such as the practical effect of gender stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace.
- The college provides effective information and guidance services that learners use and appreciate.
- Arrangements to identify and provide specialist support for learners with additional learning needs are good. These have improved greatly since the previous inspection. Learners' needs are identified more quickly and accurately through closer monitoring of applications together with earlier initial assessment

and diagnostic assessment; the number of self-referrals has increased significantly. Practical individual support, for example for dyslexia, is provided at the earliest opportunity.

- The number of learners requiring support has increased nearly five-fold since the last academic year. Learners value the support they receive highly and any stigma attached to the need for support has been reduced significantly. High learner demand for the wide range of services, which include revised mentoring and mental health support, is at risk of overwhelming some elements, notably the learning support workshops.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- Learners' behaviour in lessons and around the campus is good. Learners readily comply with requests from teachers and they are respectful and courteous. They are from very diverse backgrounds and communities and get on well, taking part in many social and sporting activities harmoniously.
- Learners show high levels of respect for their peers and for staff, supporting each other through good teamwork. Learners talk confidently and they are able to articulate well during class discussions, using appropriate subject-specific vocational language. For example, sport and exercise students gave constructive comments to their peers on the accuracy of methods used for data collection and analytical techniques used for a research project. In another session learners provided feedback to an athlete of their choice regarding their performance; using key words to identify strengths and areas for improvement, they set specific and measurable targets using appropriate language.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality to lessons have improved since the last inspection, but they are not consistently high enough in some important areas of the college such as GCSE English and mathematics and in tutorials.
- Apprentices develop good skills for work as a result of their work-based training. They receive effective mentoring and guidance from their employers and assessors which helps them decide on their next steps in employment or training. College staff are very responsive to employers' needs; they are flexible and make it easy for employers to fit apprentices' work and college attendance together. Managers make frequent and regular contact with businesses; for instance well-attended meetings with engineering and construction employers take place every two months.
- Learners in receipt of high-needs funding make excellent progress. They develop confidence, self-esteem, communication and practical skills through internships and relevant work placements. They develop very good independent living and employability skills while on placement at Kingston Hospital and working in Apple Tree café on the college campus.
- Learners aged 16 to 19 benefit from a wide range of stimulating and worthwhile work-related tutorials and enrichment activities. They develop a wide interest in the world around them and learn how to lead a safe and healthy life. However, tutors do not yet provide all learners with sufficient guidance on the study skills that will enable them to be a successful learner and they do not always tailor their group tutorials to meet each learner's needs.
- Learners' practical skills are developed well through the growing and relevant work placements available. Travel and tourism teachers ensure that learners have the opportunity to study in industry and this often leads to offers of employment for learners. Relevant voluntary work is provided within the college and the wider community, through open events, enrolment, induction and the college's Ambassador scheme. Good links with a broad range of employers enable learners to participate in college talks about their work and help them to participate in relevant work placements. However, despite this good range of activities, tutors do not help learners sufficiently well to develop their employability skills in group tutorials.
- The majority of learners have a clear idea of how their career may be initiated. All learners have access to careers information and can arrange appointments to discuss career pathways. A variety of software packages are available for learners and advisers to support careers advice. Successful careers fairs are held and good collaboration for student projects occurs. For example Haymarket Publishing is working with learners on designing the new logo for the Richmond upon Thames School, and Berkeley Housebuilders work with learners on bench design. Learners' progression to higher education and further training is good.
- The student services team provide good support through counselling, financial support and careers advice. Together the team provide helpful specialist advice and guidance. Good learning resources encourage learners to explore mental health issues, drug and alcohol awareness. Learners feel safe and know how to protect themselves. They understand who to go to if they feel threatened. British values are discussed and learners engage in debate on issues such as radicalisation, extremism and different forms of abuse and bullying. Personal tutors liaise closely with parents/carers and learners, providing information on the smooth transition to the next stage in their careers.

Outcomes for learners require improvement

- Outcomes for learners have improved in many areas, but they remain an aspect of the college that requires further improvement. The proportion of both younger and adult learners successfully completing their courses has risen and for a significant number of courses, especially in the vocational areas, these proportions are now around the national averages. The proportion of GCE A-level learners successfully gaining their qualifications remains high. This is not the case for a significant number of GCE AS-level subjects where success rates declined in 2015 and are below the national picture. Several GCSE subjects also had poor success rates.
- At the previous inspection, learners on many courses were failing to achieve the grades that they would be expected to achieve given their qualifications when they started at college. This has improved and the majority of learners completing GCE A, AS and full-time vocational subjects in 2015 achieved the grades that their entry qualifications predicted.
- The proportion of apprentices successfully completing their courses was poor at the last inspection. The college worked hard to help apprentices who had fallen behind and to ensure that more gain their qualification in the agreed timescale. These proportions are now much higher and above national averages.
- Learners' mathematics and English skills vary widely but are satisfactory overall. A higher proportion of learners gain their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics than at the previous inspection. The improvements here have been more marked for adult learners, but for all ages the proportions are now higher than seen nationally. However, success rates on GCSE English and mathematics declined in 2015 but remained above the national average.
- The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. There are some good examples of skills development, for example in catering and in some art and design courses. In a minority of subjects, learners' understanding of the topic they were studying was less secure and would not provide a sound foundation for further development.
- At the previous inspection, learners were being set target grades that were much too optimistic and many of them failed to attain their predicted grade. Current learners all have a formal graded assessment during their first five weeks in college to assess their progress. The outcome of these assessments shows that current learners are making at least the progress expected of them and a significant proportion are achieving high grades. This is not uniform across all subjects and in a minority of subjects only a small proportion of learners are doing well. The usefulness of this work is impeded as the college does not use a nationally validated value added system to support this work.
- Learners make good progress into employment or further study at a higher level. Many learners progress to higher education and study at a wide range of universities, including those in the Russell Group. Learners with learning difficulties and those with higher needs make good progress into further study at a higher level or into employment. Many of them who start at college on one of the college's specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) move on and study vocational programmes.
- There are no significant gaps in terms of progress or attainment between different groups of learners.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- At the time of inspection there were 2,368 learners on 16 to 19 study programmes. Since the previous inspection managers have developed a more extensive vocational offer. There is now a wide range of both vocational and academic study programmes, which provide good progression routes for learners.
- Teaching learning and assessment are well planned, much more effectively than at the previous inspection. Schemes of work are detailed and usefully signpost opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of their subject and such aspects as equality and diversity, employability and English and mathematics skills. Many learners make use of correct technical language. For example, GCE A-level sport students correctly describe complex technical anatomical terms.
- Teachers often make good reference to employability skills such as team working and communications and include activities to develop these in their lessons. Learners are studying English and mathematics at an appropriate level to support their vocational and academic programmes, but too few teachers effectively check how well learners are developing their skills in English and mathematics during lessons in their main subjects.
- The majority of learners now make the progress that is expected of them, a much better position than at the previous inspection. Teachers provide well-structured activities, which provide good levels of challenge to learners and help them to work hard.
- Teachers of vocational subjects use their occupational knowledge well to help learners to practise and develop the technical skills they need to succeed. In GCE A and AS lessons, teachers skilfully facilitate

debate and discussion and as a result students learn profitably from each other.

- The standard of the majority of learners' work is satisfactory and sometimes better. Art and design teachers provide a disciplined and studious focus on drawing systems and as a result learners acquire the technical skills to enable them to realise their ideas and designs as they progress. Learners studying timber trades extend their skills through more complex work such as learning how to make high-quality doors with inlaid veneer and raised panels.
- While these positive improvements are evident and more widespread than at the last inspection, they are not consistently evident in enough lessons. For example in a science lesson poor attendance and punctuality, and the slow pace of the lesson, resulted in very little learning taking place. A minority of teachers still do not provide enough opportunities for learners to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding and do not check effectively to make sure learners have understood before moving on to the next topic. A minority of learners who have fallen behind in their work are not given enough support to enable them to catch up. Learner attendance is good in GCE A levels, but in vocational lessons it is too low.
- Learners' progress is now monitored much more effectively than at the previous inspection and the feedback learners receive on their work has improved. A minority of this feedback still does not provide clear information on what learners need to do in order to improve their performance. The new online assessment system helps teachers to set more accurate target grades for learners based on their prior attainment.
- The college provides effective information and guidance services that learners value very highly. Improvements to this guidance and the interview processes have resulted in the great majority of current learners now having the required entry qualifications needed to access their chosen course of study.
- Study programmes are now well planned and based on both employers' and learners' needs. Work placements to help learners get ready for employment are designed specifically to meet the needs of each subject. For example, in construction a collaborative project with the awarding organisation and a major employer successfully produced an activity that resulted in carpentry and joinery students learning new skills to meet industry needs and helping them to progress to apprenticeships.

Adult learning programmes

are good

- Adult learners, mostly studying part time, enrol in all the programme areas the college offers. Around 70% of them enrol through two subcontractors who deliver English for speakers of other languages and literacy and numeracy programmes. Some 30% of learners enrol directly onto a wide range of subjects in the college. The proportion of adults who successfully complete their programmes is high across all adult provision.
- Managers have extended the range of provision for adults in consultation with local employers and other partners. For example, sport fitness and sport massage programmes have been developed with local hotels and fitness gyms. In addition accountancy courses, a foundation art and design programme and Access to Higher Education provision are now established.
- Learners are polite and respectful of others. There is a good appreciation of diversity. They work well together and support each other. Most make good progress in lessons. For example, in the foundation art and design programme students quickly become independent learners with the support of their teachers and gain immensely from the ability to draw on the experiences of their peers. This helps to develop their confidence and team-building skills.
- Learners discuss their work clearly and confidently, using appropriate vocational language. They work with good attention to health and safety. They develop good practical skills and skills for employment enabling them to further their careers.
- Most teaching is good and delivered by specialist staff who skilfully relate theory to practical applications in the workplace. Practical work in lessons also reflects well the work of the vocational area. For example in professional cookery a group of NVQ learners prepare the lunch menu for the restaurant to a high standard, displaying good practical and planning skills.
- In a few lessons, there is a lack of stretch and challenge and more-able learners are not given extra tasks to help them extend their knowledge further. A few teachers do not check often enough that learners understand the work. Reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills in many vocational lessons is underdeveloped.
- There is regular assessment of learning with written feedback, which provides clear support to help learners to improve their work. Teachers also provide good individual feedback in lessons. For example, in an Access to Higher Education health and human science lesson, learners planned their individual practical investigations. The teacher discussed these plans with them and helped them to plan a project that would be useful, realistic and achievable.
- Data regarding where learners progress to when they complete their studies at the college is

underdeveloped. Subcontractors now record this information. A sample of recent adult leavers indicates that around half of them went on to further or higher education and just under a third into employment.

- Learners receive helpful advice and guidance before they enrol and during their courses. In sports science learners are well supported during pre-entry and entry phases using different types of communication including a chat room. Good careers advice is provided centrally by vocational tutors who often help learners to complete their CVs and hone their interview skills.

Apprenticeships

are good

- There are 108 advanced apprentices and 21 intermediate apprentices spread across subjects as diverse as engineering, leisure, travel and tourism, construction and built environment, business administration and information communication technology. The proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programmes within the agreed timescale has risen significantly since the last inspection and is now high.
- The apprenticeship provision is well managed and standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. Apprentices make good progress and develop good team working and practical skills. They have a good understanding of the knowledge and theory implicit in their subjects. For example, engineering design apprentices shaped and welded a pressure vessel, which was then subjected to high pressure to check for leaks. This helped them to further their understanding on properties of the different materials they are required to work with.
- Over half of the apprentices who completed their advanced apprenticeship in sporting excellence last year now compete at national level. Two of them have progressed to the full UK rowing squad and one is a junior world championship gold medallist.
- Apprentices make very good progress after they have completed their apprenticeships. Some 90% of engineering apprentices gained distinctions in their technical certificate and of the 38 advanced apprentices who left in the last year, 34 of them progressed to study on higher education courses.
- Managers have very good links with employers and they use these well to ensure that apprenticeship programmes provide apprentices with the most relevant qualifications which improve their future employment prospects. Apprentices in engineering, for example, benefit from a bespoke programme designed with the sector lead body for local employers, which has proved very successful.
- Managers in each subject area closely monitor apprentices' progress, but systems are not sufficiently well developed to allow them to gain an easy overview of groups of learners.
- Employers receive regular feedback on each apprentice's progress. They are closely engaged in training and attend employer forums every other month to discuss the latest developments and how apprentices can be supported more effectively. They are enthusiastic in their support for apprentices and appreciate the value that apprentices bring to their businesses.
- Most apprentices already have their GCSE grades A* to C in English and mathematics when they start and most develop good written and number skills. However, assessors and trainers do not routinely challenge all apprentices to make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Plans are not in place to work on specific tasks that help improve their weaker skills.
- All apprentices feel and are safe while in learning. Progress reviews are effective and most of them routinely develop and check apprentices' understanding of key issues such as personal and online safety.

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,215
Principal/CEO	Robin Ghurbhurun
Website address	rutc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	124	153	424	119	1815	158	-	84
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	15	6	76	39	-	2		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14-16	14 part-time learners							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adult Training Network Limited ■ Life Long Learning Centre Limited 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Wilf Hudson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barrett-Mold	Ofsted Inspector
Sarbdip Noonan	Ofsted Inspector
Cliff Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Bealey	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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