

Colchester Institute

General further education college

| Inspection dates | 9–12 February 2016 | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Overall effectiveness | Good | | | |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good | | | |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good | | | |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good | | | |
| Outcomes for learners | Good | | | |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Good | | | |
| Adult learning programmes | Good | | | |
| Apprenticeships | Good | | | |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement | | | |

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students, adult learners and apprentices make good progress from their starting points and benefit from high standards of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Students gain good technical and practical skills which prepare them well for the world of work.
- Teachers and managers confidently introduce new approaches in lessons with innovative techniques to interest and enthuse students.
- Senior leaders, managers and governors have rapidly improved the quality of provision in the areas identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers use good links with employers to ensure that the curriculum meets their needs.
- Students across all provision types and campuses show respect for each other and their teachers, are confident and behave well. They have a positive attitude to their studies.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Attendance and achievement rates need to improve on GCSE English and mathematics courses.
- Written feedback and targets agreed with students and apprentices are too general. Targets do not focus sufficiently on the precise actions that students need to take in order to make more rapid progress.

Full report

Information about the provider

- 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 six other locations to meet local and regional needs, including the Energy Skills Centre in Harwich.
- The college provides a wide range of further education and vocational training programmes with clear progression routes for students. The apprenticeship provision is delivered both by the college itself and a small number of subcontractors.
- Educational achievement in schools local to the college 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.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers provide detailed written feedback and set challenging targets that enable all learners to understand fully how to improve their work, accelerate their learning and reach their potential.
- Ensure that students attend their GCSE English and mathematics lessons, improve their skills and gain their qualifications in these subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and a strong team of governors have taken robust and decisive actions to raise standards and the aspirations of staff and students at the college. Leaders have created an open and supportive culture. Senior leaders and managers have set challenging targets which have increased the proportion of students who complete their qualifications significantly.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly and are now good. Leaders and managers have achieved this improvement by focusing lesson observations on the impact of teaching and learning effectively and by identifying key college priorities to improve the craft of teaching. For example, one priority has been the use of effective questions to check and extend students' understanding. Teachers receive very detailed feedback on their performance, which is then carefully combined with individual support from learning coaches and extensive professional development activities to extend their range of teaching skills.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have implemented more rigorous arrangements for quality monitoring and performance management, which are aligned well to aspirational targets for improvement. Managers evaluate data rigorously and review these frequently with teachers to ensure that individual students make the progress expected of them.
- An innovative, collaborative learning initiative between managers and teachers has promoted well the wider sharing of good teaching ideas and best practice. As a result, teachers have gained greater confidence in using more creative and inventive approaches in their teaching which engage and enthuse students successfully and help their progress.
- Managers and staff have maintained a strong focus on preparing students for future careers and employment. Leaders and managers have strengthened further the already strong and productive relationships with external partners, employers and the local enterprise partnership. They ensure that the courses offered reflect national, regional and local priorities and skills needs; this increases the future employment and career opportunities for students. Employers and partners value the openness and responsiveness of staff at the college and their willingness to react to their agendas.
- The self-assessment process is comprehensive and takes good account of the views of employers and students. Self-assessment is highly evaluative, realistic and accurate. Managers recognise the progress made, while identifying in detail aspects which require further development.
- Senior leaders and governors are determined to ensure that success rates for students are uniformly high and to embed the new quality systems fully so that students in all provision types receive a high-quality experience and achieve their full potential.
- Senior leaders and managers have increased the capacity of the college to sustain further improvement successfully in carefully targeted areas of provision, while also skilfully managing the college's finances through a difficult period. For example, they have created a new team of specialist teachers to improve outcomes for students in English and mathematics. A second team has worked closely with local employers and other partners to increase the number of high-quality work experience opportunities for students.

■ The governance of the provider

- Governors scrutinise college performance rigorously and challenge managers effectively on key issues, for example on the success of students and the pace of improvement.
- Governors have extensive business and financial skills which they have applied very effectively to help shape the college's ambitious vision for the future.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Robust central systems ensure the suitability of all staff, including that of subcontractors. Staff and
 governors receive regular training on safeguarding. Any safeguarding concerns are reported fully and
 addressed promptly.
- Students feel safe at the college and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Staff are alert to
 any discriminatory behaviour, such as internet bullying. Staff actively promote students' awareness of
 equality and diversity and have created an open and inclusive culture where students work together
 well and show mutual respect.

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- Leaders and managers have clear policies to respond to the government's 'Prevent' duty. They work
 closely with relevant agencies to identify risk factors and report any concerns over extremism or
 radicalisation.
- A very small minority of staff have not yet completed training to raise their awareness of the 'Prevent' duty. As a consequence, a few teachers are not confident to explore these areas in a meaningful and relevant way with their students, for example to support discussion with students around radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The large majority of students and apprentices make good progress from their starting points. Most teachers and assessors set high expectations and challenge students to produce work to a high standard. Most teachers use new approaches in lessons confidently so that their students develop higher-order learning skills.
- Most teachers and assessors have high levels of subject knowledge and experience. They plan a broad range of tasks and activities that reflect industry practice well and motivate students and apprentices to develop their knowledge and skills. They use questioning techniques effectively to probe, check and further extend students' and apprentices' understanding. Assessors challenge apprentices to develop their problem-solving and technical skills well. Employers value the contribution apprentices make in the workplace when applying their learning confidently.
- The large majority of teachers ensure that students and apprentices have a firm grasp of how and why relevant theory underpins their practical skills development. For example, in a motor vehicle maintenance theory lesson, students accelerated their knowledge and understanding of vehicle systems by analysing the difference between petrol and diesel engines.
- Most teachers use a rich mix of resources and information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning in lessons and when students are working independently outside the classroom. However, a minority of teachers do not ensure that adults on part-time courses use online resources to further develop their learning.
- A small minority of teachers do not plan effectively to meet the needs of their students. They set mundane tasks that fail to interest students, answer their own questions and do not provide enough time for students to think through and apply their learning. As a result, a small minority of students produce poor standards of work and do not make enough progress to succeed.
- Teachers and assessors use a broad range of assessment tasks to challenge students to appreciate their progress, consolidate their knowledge and skills and extend their learning further. The large majority of teachers' and assessors' written and oral feedback helps students and apprentices know what to do to improve their work. However, a small minority of teachers' written feedback does not provide sufficient information or challenge to enable students on study programmes, particularly those struggling to achieve higher grades, to develop their learning and make progress.
- Not enough teachers set precise targets with their students to promote and measure progress. A minority of teachers set targets that focus exclusively on the completion of qualifications and do not challenge students to extend their learning sufficiently and achieve more rapidly.
- Most teaching in discrete English and mathematics lessons is good, particularly on GCSE courses. As a result, far more students are making better progress than in previous years. Experienced teachers plan well to meet the specific needs of their students. They provide additional tuition to ensure that students master key theoretical concepts and principles. For example, in an English GCSE lesson the teacher used a good range of prompts and resources to enable students to improve their understanding of different types of literature successfully and use a broad range of features and techniques adeptly in their creative writing.
- The majority of teachers promote English and mathematics within their vocational subject areas well. However, a small minority of teachers do not ensure that their students understand and improve their mathematics skills and/or English writing skills sufficiently in their lessons and course work. While apprentices at intermediate level develop their English and mathematics skills successfully and beyond the minimum level required for their programme, not enough apprentices at advanced level have the opportunity to improve their skills sufficiently.
- The assessment of students' abilities and skills at the start of their programme is thorough and informs the planning of their learning accurately. Students and apprentices who need help with their studies receive timely additional support. Managers ensure that adult students on courses to prepare them for employment receive relevant support that helps them make good progress. However, study programme

- teachers do not always ensure that learning support practitioners provide sufficient help to students. Managers have not ensured that all apprentices who require support receive it, to enable them to succeed as well as their peers.
- Teachers and assessors develop effectively apprentices' understanding of how equality and diversity are an integral part of their work and how they communicate with clients. Teachers have created successfully a culture of tolerance and respect between all students across the college. However, a small minority of teachers do not plan sufficiently to ensure that students on study programmes understand why equality and diversity matter in employment settings.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Students, adult learners and apprentices take pride in their work, enjoy their learning and benefit from increased confidence as a result of their time at the college. They behave well in lessons and this contributes to the good progress the large majority make towards the completion of their intended outcomes. Attendance on vocational study programmes and off-the-job learning activities is good, but conversely too few students attend the English and mathematics elements of their programmes. Students who attend English and mathematics lessons regularly make good progress.
- Students gain good practical skills, for example in engineering, hospitality, hairdressing, and health and social care. A large majority of apprentices produce high standards of work. This is appreciated by employers, who say this adds value to their businesses. Unemployed adults gain crucial skills that are well-matched to local employers' needs and a large majority gain employment following their studies.
- Students and apprentices have a good understanding of, and are able to discuss, issues relating to British values. Most students and apprentices are open and willing to discuss diversity confidently, which broadens their awareness.
- A central college team has increased the work experience opportunities for students on study programmes significantly. As a result, a much larger proportion undertake relevant work experience as part of their study programmes, particularly where this is an integral part of their qualification. Teachers and staff are very effective in helping students gain high-level practical skills and in developing skills and attitudes to prepare students for employment.
- High needs students benefit from varied provision and gain good independent living skills. They contribute well to their studies and improve their life choices through well-planned group activities, such as work experience with local employers, and taking part in sporting activities, such as sitting volleyball and football matches.
- Comprehensive careers guidance throughout students' time at the college prepares them well to make informed choices about their next steps into further study or employment. Students are well informed of their next steps and the options available to them. Adult learners benefit from very good advice and guidance regarding their future employment opportunities, during and on completion of their studies.
- Students, adult learners and apprentices work in safe environments and know how to keep themselves and others safe. They are aware of health and safety requirements while in the workplace and adhere to these requirements well.
- A college 'Active College Maker' promotes health and well-being initiatives across the college effectively. These initiatives provide good encouragement for students from a wide range of courses to become involved and raise their awareness of leading healthy lifestyles.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Outcomes for learners have improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of students completing their courses has improved in most vocational subject areas and levels. The large majority of students on study programmes at all levels achieve their intended outcomes within their agreed timescales, particularly those at level 3. In a few areas, such as GCSE English and mathematics, success rates are improving but remain below those of similar providers.
- Students who attend English and mathematics lessons make good progress. Pass rates at grades A* to C in English and mathematics are improving, but remain below those at other providers. Success rates for functional skills in English and mathematics are in line with other providers nationally.

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- A high proportion of apprentices, both at intermediate and advanced level, complete their studies and achieve their intended outcomes. Success rates are high and exceed the national rate. Apprentices gain high-quality skills valued by employers, for example in engineering where apprentices design and produce high-level technical components.
- The standard of students' work is high. The vast majority make good progress in their lessons and enjoy their learning. For example, students in hospitality produce high-quality food and services available to the public and often contribute to external events where they represent the college well.
- Progression into further education and employment is high and progression between the levels at the college demonstrates an improving three-year trend, linking to an ambition of managers to provide 'ladders of opportunity' for students. Nearly half of level 3 students progress to higher education. Courses provided for unemployed adults help the large majority of them to improve their skills and find work in employment sectors across the region. Senior leaders and managers challenge teachers effectively, who in turn discuss and set challenging aspirational targets for students. The proportion of students gaining high grades has improved.
- There are no significant achievement gaps between different groups of students on vocational study programmes. However, a higher proportion of adult learners do achieve their GSCE English and mathematics than their younger peers. In apprenticeships, those who require support do not complete their qualifications in the same timescale as others.
- Students benefit from teachers helping them to improve their mathematical skills in a large majority of lessons. Teachers are adept at making mathematical skills relevant to the work and course context. For example, teachers in carpentry and joinery challenge students to measure accurately and produce test pieces to a high standard.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The college provides study programmes for around 4,000 young people, with just under half on level 3 programmes and the remainder on levels 1 and 2. Students benefit from a wide range of provision, with the largest areas being health, public services and care, engineering and construction, retail and commercial services and arts and media.
- Students benefit from teachers and leaders' high expectations. Senior leaders have increased the number of specialist staff who teach English and mathematics substantially. In addition, a dedicated work placement team, together with course tutors, supports students to gain relevant work experience that matches their skills and interests closely. As a result, students make good progress.
- Teachers create and use a wide and innovative variety of resources, and plan activities that ensure that students enjoy learning and work hard in lessons. For example, hair and beauty students participate in a college-wide competition that enables them to develop their creativity while meeting essential assessment requirements. Most students make good progress towards the achievement of their qualification outcomes.
- Students gain good practical skills. For example, hospitality students create dishes of increasing complexity throughout their programme, and work very well together in a busy kitchen to produce food of restaurant standard. Students also develop useful independent learning skills through reflecting on and evaluating their own work and that of their peers. For example, in a functional skills mathematics lesson students created geometric shapes and designed questions about the measurement of the shapes, which other students answered. In art, students used coloured sticky notes to critique the work of others.
- Most teachers use skilful questioning techniques that help students to develop complex ideas and explore, refine and justify their opinions. This provides good role modelling for students, who are confident enough to challenge and support each other in discussions. The large majority of students at all levels understand and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately.
- Teachers check learning well in lessons and give thorough oral feedback that promotes students' progress. However, in a small minority of cases written feedback does not provide a sufficiently sharp focus on the precise actions students need to take in order to improve future work.
- Teachers set realistic and challenging targets for students' progress in lessons and most students know their overall achievement targets. However, as a small majority of teachers do not use effectively the electronic systems to record students' progress, to set and monitor precise targets across the full study programme, including English, mathematics and work experience, a few students are not aware of the progress they are making.

- Students benefit from a comprehensive induction programme. This enables teachers to build detailed group profiles that identify students' prior achievement, their mathematics and English development needs and any barriers to learning. As a consequence, most students make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers create regular opportunities to develop students' mathematics skills in lessons across a wide range of subjects. For example, students in a construction theory lesson develop their understanding of scale effectively by correcting the teacher's deliberate mistakes.
- Students receive good advice on progression opportunities, and teachers encourage them to look at wider career possibilities within their chosen career aim. For example, music students practise ghost-writing techniques as an addition to their qualifications. Travel and tourism and childcare students undertake relevant work experience in their overseas trips. As well as gaining a wider knowledge of different cultures, it prepares them well for their next steps.
- Teachers and leaders use their extensive industry links to develop work experience opportunities and, in lessons, create effective links between theory and practice. On the 'career ready' programme in business and information technology, students have an allocated mentor who helps them build links with potential employers. Students also gain a good understanding of employment opportunities through an extensive range of visits and visiting speakers. Brickwork students gain valuable experience of a wide range of materials through work with local suppliers from the industry. Performing and creative arts students learn essential skills for self-employment by putting on exhibitions and performances.
- Students have a good understanding of equality, diversity and life in modern Britain. For example, entry-level students participated in a discussion of the changing roles of women in jobs traditionally associated with men. In another lesson, business students engaged in a lively discussion about the dangers of stereotyping.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe. Hospitality students adhere to strict safety guidelines in a production kitchen, and engineering and construction students take pride in keeping clean and wellorganised workshops.

Adult learning programmes

are good

- Senior leaders have made significant changes to the management and delivery of adult learning programmes and the range of programmes offered. Around 500 students are on courses related to gaining employment, offered in conjunction with external partners, and about 1,400 benefit from the wide variety of provision at the college. This has improved overall success rates significantly. The proportion of current students remaining in learning is very high and the large majority of students make good progress towards achieving their planned qualifications.
- Students who complete their qualifications progress well into employment or to higher levels of education. Students benefit from good advice and guidance to support them in planning their next steps. Teachers monitor the progress students make in applying to and gaining university places effectively.
- Students benefit from good teaching that helps them to improve their subject knowledge and job-seeking skills, develop their English and mathematics skills, and increase their self-confidence. Teachers plan and organise a good range of teaching, learning and assessment activities effectively to interest and challenge students to achieve. They check and assess learning carefully, helping students to analyse their work and improve their skills. For example, access to higher education students value the detailed feedback received from teachers, which helps them improve their assignment writing and approaches to critically analysing text. Students develop a high standard of professional skills. For example, students in hospitality develop very good knife skills and prepare complex vegetable cuts confidently.
- Senior leaders, managers and staff work effectively with a range of partners, including Jobcentre Plus, local councils and employers, to provide a comprehensive range of programmes for adults. Unemployed adult students benefit from training programmes offered in five Learning Shops strategically placed for the local community to access. Students at the Harwich Energy Skills Centre gain qualifications relevant for jobs in local offshore wind farm industries. The large range of English for speakers of other languages provision meets the needs of the growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the local community very well.
- Teachers promote students' understanding of equality and diversity actively, through welcoming and valuing students' views and contributions. Students in a beauty class contributed to a challenging debate on cultural attitudes to body art. Students develop a good understanding of the importance of tolerance through working with others from a range of backgrounds, experiences and ages. Teachers' reinforcement of safeguarding and health and safety is very effective. In one electrical engineering session, the teacher ensured that students completed a detailed risk assessment of the planned practical activity before entering the workshop.

- Students develop good English and mathematical skills that are highly relevant to their vocational training. For example, in beauty therapy they learn how to communicate with clients effectively. However, in a small minority of classes for unemployed learners, teachers do not place sufficient attention on helping students to develop strategies to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- A small minority of teachers do not set clear targets routinely that will help students achieve their qualifications and develop the specific skills they need. A small minority of students, particularly part-time students, do not understand their targets, which slows their progress.

Apprenticeships

are good

- The college has 827 intermediate, 720 advanced and 19 higher apprentices. Subcontractors are responsible for around a third of apprentices. The majority of apprentices follow programmes in engineering and construction, with the remainder mostly in health and care, retail and business administration.
- Senior leaders and managers plan good apprenticeship programmes that meet employer needs well. For example, in liaison with a local employer, managers and staff have developed bespoke rail qualifications in engineering.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications and an increasing proportion do so within their agreed timescales. Almost all current apprentices make good or better progress.
- Apprentices benefit from good off-the-job training sessions at college, through the innovative use of ILT or in one-to-one sessions in the workplace. For example, teachers use ILT effectively to deliver remote sessions to groups of apprentices. Assessors and teachers use their vocational expertise and skills well to plan a wide range of activities for apprentices. Apprentices are highly motivated and are keen to improve their skills.
- Teachers and assessors have high expectations of their apprentices and expect them to do well. For example, most intermediate engineering, construction and business administration apprentices gain higher-level English and mathematics qualifications than are required for their learning programme. Most apprentices progress to higher-level learning programmes and/or sustainable employment. This motivates them to achieve and complete their learning programme.
- Most teachers and assessors are good at helping apprentices to improve their mathematics skills, particularly in engineering and construction where apprentices work to tight tolerances in high technological industries. The development of apprentices' written skills is less consistent.
- There is too little emphasis on correcting apprentices' spelling and grammar, or improving their English and mathematical skills, while they complete their advanced apprenticeships.
- Apprentices develop good vocational practical skills and increase their value to employers. They benefit from opportunities in the workplace to apply their skills, which helps them develop their knowledge about wider aspects of their company. For example, an intermediate hairdressing apprentice represented her company at a wedding fair and now appreciates how marketing can increase the number of clients that visit the salon.
- Apprentices contribute well to their workplace, and as valued team members they gain confidence and become reliable members of the workforce. The very large majority of apprentices achieve more responsibility in their jobs since starting their learning programme, progress to higher-level learning programmes or gain permanent employment. Apprentices make a significant contribution to their employer's business. A social media apprentice now has the responsibility for opening new market places online for their company and a business administration apprentice manages the accounting processes for major clients.
- Assessment is good. Teachers and assessors use effective tracking and progress monitoring systems to carry out regular assessments in the workplace. Assessors make reliable judgements and assessment decisions.
- Apprentices benefit from detailed oral feedback from assessors, which helps them understand what they need to do to plan improvements to their work and practice. However, written or recorded feedback does not identify what apprentices have done well or what they need to do to improve.
- Target setting for apprentices requires improvement. Only a minority of assessors set detailed targets. The majority are too broad, relate to the completion of workbooks and units and do not enable individual apprentices to know what skills, knowledge and understanding they need to improve precisely.
- The large majority of apprentices have a good understanding of diversity and the needs of different cultures. For example, in hairdressing an apprentice was able to discuss cultural awareness and respecting gender roles in different cultures. Engineering apprentices are able to discuss diversity in their workplace and how colleagues work together.

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

8,864

Principal/CEO Alison Andreas

Website address <u>www.colchester.ac.uk</u>

Provider information at the time of the inspection

| Provider information at the time | e or the | e inspe | ectio | n | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------|---------|-----------|------|-------|---------------------|-------|-----|--|
| Main course or learning programme level | Level 1 or below | | Level 2 | | Leve | el 3 | 3 Level 4 and above | | | |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships) Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-1 | 18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | |
| | 879 | 388 | 1,27 | 76 355 | | 1,831 | 399 | 0 0 | | |
| | Intermediate | | | e Advance | | | Higher | | | |
| | 16-18 | 19 | 9+ | 16-18 | | 19+ | 16- | 16-18 | | |
| | 523 | 3 | 04 | | 350 | 370 | C |) | 19 | |
| Number of traineeships | 16-19 | | | 19+ | | | | Total | | |
| | 0 | | | 0 | | | | 0 | | |
| Number of learners aged 14-16 | 0 | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from | Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency | | | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | ■ MEAT Ipswich | | | | | | | | | |
| | ■ Catten college | | | | | | | | | |
| | EASI Hairdressing Academy | | | | | | | | | |
| | ABA TrainingCareer Track | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ■ Virtual Learning UK | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pioneering Sailing TrustThe Equestrian Learning Academy | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
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Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Stephen Hunsley, lead inspector Her Majesty's Inspector Matthew Vaughan Her Majesty's Inspector Alan Winchcombe Ofsted Inspector Pauline Hawkesford Ofsted Inspector **Christopher Bealey** Ofsted Inspector Stephen Masterson Ofsted Inspector Penelope Fawcus Ofsted Inspector Ofsted Inspector Teresa Kiely Christine Blowman Ofsted Inspector Philip Elliott Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Vice Principal, as nominee. 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 students 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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