

# Regent College

Sixth form college



## Inspection dates

22–24 March 2016

## 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	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Actions taken by managers to improve provision have not yet had sufficient measurable impact.
- Students following academic programmes make less progress than expected given their starting points.
- Too few students following vocational programmes at level 1 and level 2 successfully achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers do not provide activities that challenge more-able students sufficiently.
- Students with very low prior attainment in English and mathematics do not make enough progress in developing these skills.
- Teachers do not check learning sufficiently within lessons.
- Teachers do not adjust their lessons to reinforce topics that students have not fully understood.
- Students' attendance remains too low.
- Not enough students engage in work experience.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The large majority of students progress to higher levels of study, employment or training, with a significant number of students progressing from lower-level qualifications on to university.
- Students who need extra help receive comprehensive support to overcome their difficulties.
- English and mathematics students who have previously gained a grade D are highly successful in gaining GCSE A\* to C grades in these subjects.
- Leaders have recently established an inclusive curriculum that better suits the needs and aspirations of its diverse student population.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Regent College is a sixth form college in the centre of Leicester. Unlike most sixth form colleges, it offers a broad mix of academic and vocational programmes from level 1 through to level 3. It attracts an ethnically diverse group of students from the city and surrounding area. There are two other sixth form colleges and a general further education college in the city and three schools offering A-level courses.
- Attainment in Leicester schools has declined over the last two years and the proportion of young people who leave with five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is significantly lower than the national rate and the rate in the county of Leicestershire. Unemployment in Leicester is higher than the national rate. Those in employment are less likely than individuals in other parts of the country to be in managerial or technical roles and are likely to earn less than the national average salary.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all lessons, and particularly in those for A-level students, so that teachers:
  - provide greater challenge for more-able students
  - make better use of information about students' existing skills and knowledge to develop lessons that meet all their needs
  - check students' learning more effectively and use the information this provides to adjust teaching to reinforce topics students have not fully understood
  - provide written feedback on marked work that is sufficiently clear and detailed to help students improve.
- Monitor closely the progress of students on level 1 and level 2 vocational programmes to ensure that they make appropriate progress and successfully pass the new suite of qualifications. Intervene quickly where evidence suggests that there is a risk of students being unsuccessful.
- Ensure that all staff emphasise the importance of good attendance and implement a range of actions to increase attendance on all elements of students' programmes. Coordinate closely the work of teachers and personal supervisors to ensure that they provide good support to all students for whom attendance is a barrier to learning.
- Develop a range of work experience opportunities and ensure that all students, including those following academic programmes, access these as appropriate to their needs.
- Review the progress of lower-ability students undertaking GCSE mathematics programmes to ensure that they are making rapid progress towards an A\* to C grade. Where this is not the case, provide further support or consider appropriate alternative qualifications for these students.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' and managers' actions to maintain and improve standards have not been fully effective. Too many aspects of provision require improvement, including student attendance, aspects of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress made by students, especially those following academic programmes.
- Judgements made by managers about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are too positive and these limit the extent to which they are able to make improvements. However, judgements about outcomes for students are accurate and the quality improvement plan deals with most of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. Curriculum managers have produced accurate assessments of their own subject areas and their quality improvement plans are appropriate.
- The strategic management and oversight of the college's small but growing apprenticeship programme require improvement. No judgements about the quality of apprenticeships are provided in the self-assessment report. Managers' awareness of the volume and quality of apprenticeship provision is insufficient. However, current apprenticeship numbers are small and the lack of oversight has not had a significant impact on their progress.
- Managers have been slow to tackle the underperformance of academic programmes and too many A-level qualifications continue to perform poorly. However, in a few cases, such as AS-level psychology, they have used sound performance management arrangements to good effect.
- Managers have not been successful in improving outcomes for White British students. As a result, these students make less progress than their peers and are less likely to achieve their qualifications. However, managers have been more successful in improving the attainment of other groups, such as Black Caribbean students.
- Managers have placed great importance on the development of students' English and mathematics skills and have increased the amount of time devoted to teaching these subjects. They have introduced a requirement for all students who do not already have a GCSE grade C or better in mathematics to retake their GCSE in this subject, regardless of the grade they have previously gained. As a result, students with very low prior attainment in this subject are undertaking a programme that does not fully meet their needs. It is too early to measure the impact of managers' actions on the low functional skills English success rates.
- Oversight of subcontractor performance is effective. Senior managers and governors receive monthly reports on the performance of the two subcontractors that teach performing arts courses on behalf of the college. A very high proportion of students on these courses successfully achieve their qualifications. However, action plans arising from college managers' meetings with subcontractor staff are not sufficiently well recorded or formalised.
- Managers have developed good partnerships with local schools and colleges. Arrangements with a neighbouring sixth form college enable Regent College students to study A levels that the college itself does not offer. Although the college has links with a good range of employers, it does not use these to provide work experience for all students.
- College leaders, including governors, have established a very clear strategic direction and an ethos that staff at all levels share and value. Since the previous inspection, leaders have gradually reduced the volume of academic provision and focused instead on providing a broad vocational curriculum to better reflect the aspirations of their students, many of whom struggled at school or other institutions.
- Leaders and managers promote equality and diversity themes well. As a result, teachers include these topics within lessons and the college is a welcoming place to study and relationships between students are respectful.
- Leaders have created an inclusive and diverse college that reflects the community that it serves. Effective and individualised support helps many students to achieve their learning goals, including many vulnerable students such as the children of asylum seekers, children who have been in local authority care and those eligible for free school meals; students comment positively on the high level of pastoral care and support they receive.
- Managers have developed a good programme of staff training that has resulted in improvements. Recent specialist training in classroom management and discipline has contributed to improved student behaviour. Curriculum leaders and middle managers complete an 18-month course in post-16 leadership, which contributes to their understanding of curriculum and quality standards. This training has contributed significantly to the high standard of quality improvement plans at curriculum level.

## ■ The governance of the provider

- Governors' actions have not resulted in sufficient improvements to provision, despite their understanding of the college, its mission and the role it fulfils within the city. Senior leaders have not been held sufficiently to account for the performance of the college.
- Governors are very well qualified and have considerable experience of post-16 education. They have access to a good range of management and performance reports that they use to ask probing questions.

## ■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Managers follow appropriate processes for the recruitment and vetting of new staff.
- Students feel safe and know what to do if they have concerns about their own safety or that of others. Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.
- Managers ensure that college staff at all levels understand how to keep students safe from the dangers of radicalisation. However, students' own knowledge of how to keep themselves safe from these threats is less well developed.
- Strong relationships with external agencies and professionals enable staff to refer young people to effective external support.
- Staff closely monitor the number of concerns raised about students and the actions taken, to ensure that procedures are effective and rigorous.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teachers do not give sufficient consideration to the varying needs of students. Although staff gather information about students' existing skills, teachers do not use this systematically to plan activities that help all students reach their full potential. This is especially true for more-able students, who are often given work that is too easy for them. As a result, these students do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- A minority of teachers do not check the learning of their students sufficiently in lessons and as a result are unable to modify their teaching to address topics that students have not fully understood. Where teachers use oral questioning, they often fail to ensure that all students participate; other assessment methods, such as peer assessment or plenary assessments, often fail to check understanding in sufficient depth.
- Teachers set frequent written assessments and mark them promptly, but the quality of feedback they provide is very mixed and too often does not provide students with sufficient guidance to help them improve their understanding and skills.
- English and mathematics teachers do not provide a sufficiently wide variety of activities to support the broad mix of students in GCSE classes. As a result, students with less well-developed skills do not make enough progress. In lessons for other subjects, teachers do not plan sufficiently for the development of students' English and mathematics skills. Consequently, too few students develop their ability to apply these key skills within their own subject area.
- Most teaching staff have good subject knowledge and use this well to plan lessons that equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to progress to further study or employment. Assessors and employers work well together and develop apprentices' knowledge and skills to meet current professional standards. However, in a few cases teachers fail to cover subjects in sufficient depth and consequently students develop only a superficial level of understanding.
- Teachers use learning resources effectively within lessons to support students' progress. Managers have recently provided training to help teachers use information and learning technology to enliven lessons but it is too early to judge the impact of this. Teachers have not yet fully developed resources in the virtual learning environment (VLE) and these are not yet completely effective in promoting students' independent learning skills.
- Teachers incorporate a range of equality and diversity themes within lessons and this helps prepare students well for participation in the diverse society of Leicester and beyond. However, teachers do not emphasise sufficiently the importance of British values and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, many students do not develop a strong understanding of these topics.
- Students find their teachers approachable and helpful and many teachers work successfully to help those students who may be struggling with their courses. Managers have organised additional workshops, compulsory for some students and optional for others, in which students receive helpful support and encouragement to complete work and develop skills. These are very popular with students and support their progress well.

- Students who require additional learning support are provided with it quickly. Staff undertake a wide-ranging assessment of students' and apprentices' existing skills at the start of their programme, including their skills in English and mathematics. Additional support is effective in helping students and apprentices overcome barriers to learning.
- Staff ensure that parents are kept fully informed about the progress of their son or daughter. Staff review the progress of students five times during the year and send regular updates to parents. Parents are invited to attend consultation evenings twice per year and a high proportion do so; they express high levels of satisfaction with the communication they have with college staff. Employers visit the college frequently and discuss the individual progress of apprentices with assessors. This is highly effective in ensuring that apprentices make good progress and complete their frameworks in a timely manner.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** require improvement

- Students' attendance is too low. Although managers have placed a high priority on improving attendance at lessons, their actions have not yet raised attendance sufficiently. Attendance is particularly low for mock interviews with external employers as part of employability training.
- Too few students develop their employability skills through participation in work experience. Only health and social care students and a minority of business studies students benefit from work placements. Other students do not have the opportunity to develop their skills through work experience, although classroom-based employability courses support students at level 2 to develop an understanding of expectations within the workplace. The small numbers of students studying at level 1 develop good personal, social and employability skills through their participation in an intensive seven-day experience during their first term. This includes a residential weekend of challenging outdoor activities such as abseiling and rock climbing, as well as classroom-based curriculum vitae writing, interview skills and first aid courses.
- Too many students undertaking GCSE English and mathematics qualifications work at a level well below that required to gain a grade C. However, students with higher prior attainment work at a good standard and those undertaking functional skills produce work of an appropriate quality.
- The great majority of students take pride in their work, both at the college and in the workplace. Apprentices are proud of what they are doing and of the good skills they develop. This gives them confidence to do even better and often to exceed their expectations. Apprentices develop very good attitudes to work through their training that enable them to work with a wide range of different people successfully.
- Students feel very safe within the college. They have a good understanding of how to raise their concerns if they do not feel safe and know that any issues will be taken seriously. However, not all students are sufficiently clear as to how they might protect themselves from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Students' behaviour is good, both in lessons and in the social areas of the college. Students have mutually respectful relationships with other members of the very diverse college community and learn quickly about different attitudes, cultures and faiths; this increases their confidence in social situations.
- Students on level 3 courses use the extensive careers and higher education guidance they receive during weekly group information, advice and guidance sessions to make informed choices about the next stage of their education, employment or training. Other students receive effective information, advice and guidance from two suitably qualified members of the college staff as well as from their subject teachers. Almost all students have clearly defined progression options to follow at the end of the current college year. Employers and assessors work well together to ensure that apprentices receive clear and accurate information, advice and guidance that place them on the right course.
- Students develop good social and personal skills through their participation in a wide range of enrichment activities that support their understanding of, and involvement in, wider society. For example, students have opportunities to learn to play chess, knit for charity, develop European language skills and play a number of sports during the weekly timetabled activities. A high proportion of students participate in these activities.
- Personal supervisors provide good-quality pastoral care for vulnerable young students. The college's head of progress and welfare has produced a well-considered action plan to meet the needs of the relatively high number of students who have been in local authority care, though it is too soon to judge the impact of all of the identified actions.

## Outcomes for learners

## require improvement

- The proportion of students who successfully complete their programmes is lower than the national rate. Too few level 1 and 2 students pass their qualifications and the proportion of level 3 students who are successful is slightly below the rate of other providers.
- White British students do less well than their peers. This has been the case for a number of years but actions taken by managers to promote the progress of this group of students have yet to have any significant impact.
- Students following academic programmes do not make the expected level of progress from their starting points. College monitoring data indicate that current A-level students are making better progress than those at the same point last year, but it is too early to judge whether this will lead to improved grades.
- For vocational students, progress is better and has improved since the previous year. College data show that current students are making at least the level of progress expected, given their starting points.
- The quality of work produced by students varies too much from subject to subject. For example, in art and design students produce paintings, drawings and photographic images of a high quality whereas information technology students struggle to identify components of a computer system clearly and produce software of only limited complexity.
- The proportion of 16- to 18 year-old students who gained a GCSE A\* to C grade in English and mathematics in 2014/15 was significantly higher than in other colleges, with particularly high success in mathematics. The proportion of older students who gain these vital qualifications is in line with the national rate. However, the proportion of students who passed functional skills qualifications at level 1 and level 2 in 2014/15 was lower than the national rate and much lower in the case of English. A high proportion of students taking entry-level qualifications in these subjects were successful.
- The large majority of students enjoy their studies and work well both within lessons and in their own time. However, their overall success and the progress they make is affected by low levels of attendance.
- The large majority of students progress to positive destinations. The large majority of students who undertake level 1 programmes progress to level 2 and from level 2 to level 3. A high proportion of those who complete level 3 qualifications progress to university. This is a particular achievement in a college that prides itself on giving a second chance to students who have found study at school or other colleges difficult. A significant number of students secure apprenticeships or other employment when they leave the college.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### require improvement

- Approximately 1,000 students attend a broad range of academic and vocational courses from level 1 to level 3. The most popular subjects include health and social care, science, mathematics, information technology, visual arts, media, sociology, business and law.
- Too few students participate in work experience; this limits development of the skills and attitudes necessary for employment, including attendance, team working and confidence in communicating with others. Most students only gain insights into working life through employability qualifications, external speakers, occasional visits to relevant vocational settings or seeking their own employment outside of college time.
- Students' progress on advanced academic qualifications is insufficient. The lower achievement of White British students has been recognised by managers, but actions to reduce this gap have not been successful.
- Students undertaking mathematics programmes are not all following the most relevant course. Most students enrol on a one-year GCSE course, regardless of their prior attainment, and many students who have entry-level starting points do not have the basic numeracy skills to cope with even the most fundamental aspects of the GCSE.
- Staff place students on English courses that match their pre-existing skills. The standard of work in the lower-level GCSE groups is too low for students about to take their final examination.
- The monitoring of students' progress through a detailed review process is effective. Subject teachers write progress reports which are collated for discussion with each student during separately timetabled one-to-one meetings at which they set new learning targets and review action towards progression goals. However, a minority of learning targets are too broad to enable accurate measurement of progress and too few students attended the last review day.



- Students enjoy their lessons, behave well and work cooperatively with each other and their teachers. However, not enough teaching is sufficiently effective to ensure that all students make the maximum progress.
- Staff provide wide-ranging additional support to enable students to overcome barriers to learning. Student timetables include weekly progression workshops and one-to-one additional support sessions where required.
- Students benefit from a very wide range of worthwhile and stimulating enrichment activities. The great majority of students enrol on a weekly timetabled activity, attend regularly and as a result develop wider skills and interests.
- Impartial and effective careers guidance ensures that students develop clear plans for their future. Staff ensure that progression planning is a key focus for all advanced-level students in their final year through timetabled weekly information, advice and guidance sessions. The great majority of students progress to higher levels of study or employment during, or after, their study programme.
- Parents receive written progress reports twice a year and meet with staff to discuss them at consultation evenings; parents value these well-attended opportunities.

## Apprenticeships

## are good

- Regent College has 29 apprentices and 29 advanced apprentices in business administration. The apprentices are employed in local hospitals and other public sector health institutions. The college had 13 apprentices in 2014/15, nearly all of whom completed their apprenticeships within the planned timeframe; current apprentices are making good progress.
- Apprentices benefit from a strong partnership between the college and an employer and they receive good advice and guidance about their course. The employer's training coordinator works closely with college assessors to ensure that suitable candidates are enrolled on the right apprenticeship programme, and that apprentices receive a good induction that includes a thorough initial assessment of their individual needs.
- Assessors work well with the employer's staff to ensure that apprentices undertake job-related activities that enable them to produce good evidence for their assignments and portfolios. For example, managers give apprentices responsibility for working on different types of spreadsheet to record data, and encourage them to respond to a wide range of customers. Apprentices appreciate these opportunities, grow in confidence and self-esteem, and develop their professional skills well.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and become effective team members. They make appropriate progress in their English, mathematics and ICT skills and become confident and clear communicators. They improve their knowledge of their employer's business and contribute well. For example, an apprentice in a hospital training and development unit has introduced an improved tracking system to record applications for different job vacancies. Nearly all apprentices secure permanent employment positions.
- Assessors promote equality and diversity successfully; they make apprentices aware of differences during induction or through their assignments. The college supports well those apprentices who have additional learning needs, and this enables them to succeed. For example, apprentices who are visually impaired or are wheelchair users receive specialist support that enables them to make good progress. Apprentices respect and support each other well, and feel safe and secure, both in college and at work.
- Skilled assessors have high expectations of apprentices and they provide training and assessment sessions that increase apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Assessors plan and prepare good off-the-job training and individual assessments that are engaging and stimulating to help apprentices make good progress. Apprentices value the training that they receive and also understand how it helps them to improve their performance at work. Trainers occasionally rush activities in lessons without checking that all apprentices understand.
- Assessors visit apprentices in the workplace frequently; visits are purposeful and productive and assessment is good. Assessors review work and agree actions with apprentices, although a few targets lack clarity. Assessors track, record and monitor well the progress made by individual apprentices; apprentices understand how well they are progressing. Apprentices' managers do not always attend reviews in the workplace, but assessors inform them of apprentices' targets and progress through email and monthly meetings.
- Assessors manage apprenticeships well. They have effective quality assurance systems in place that enable them to monitor performance and make improvements when necessary. However, senior managers do not have enough knowledge and understanding of apprenticeship provision to support the continued success of the programme.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Sixth form college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	978
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Paul Wilson
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.regent-college.ac.uk">www.regent-college.ac.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	96	3	208	10	673	57	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	2	27	0	29	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 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:	■ The Leicester College of Performing Arts Limited							
	■ Studio 79							



## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Russell Henry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jai Sharda	Her Majesty's Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Sanders	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the director of performance, quality and improvement 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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