

Harrow College

General further education college

Inspection dates

10–13 May 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
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Achievements for learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes are not yet consistently good and vary too much between different subjects. Learners' attendance varies too much between and within curriculum areas.
- Too few learners on study programmes have external work experience, and opportunities to benefit from placements vary widely between curriculum areas.
- Achievements for apprentices, although improving in the current year, remain too low.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently high across different curriculum areas.
- While learners achieve well on entry and level 1 English and mathematics qualifications, results on level 2 courses in these subjects remain below average.
- Managers do not have a comprehensive record or analysis of learners' progression to employment to support their evaluation and future planning of the curriculum.

The provider has the following strengths

- Staff create an inclusive and harmonious environment where learners from very diverse backgrounds mix and work together very well.
- Learners for whom the college receives high-needs funding and those in, or leaving, care receive high-quality support that enables them to achieve very well.
- Provision and achievement for adult learners is good.
- Achievements for learners on courses for English for speakers of other languages are high.
- A high proportion of learners on level 3 programmes gain places at university.
- Effective arrangements for safeguarding ensure that learners feel safe on campus and know how to guard against potential risks.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Harrow College is a medium-sized general further education college operating on two main campuses in the London Borough of Harrow. The college also has two skills training centres. Learners aged 16 to 18 comprise around one third of all learners, although this provision constitutes almost two thirds of the college's funding. Nearly 600 learners aged 19 to 21 are enrolled on full-time study programmes, alongside younger learners. The largest proportion of the college's enrolments are on entry and level 1 courses and many learners join the college with relatively low levels of prior attainment. A high proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds do not have a grade C in GCSE English or mathematics when they join the college, and over half speak English as an additional language.
- Around 70% of the local population come from minority ethnic communities. The borough has high levels of religious diversity and a wide range of languages are spoken. The college's learners also reflect this very diverse local population. The borough includes areas of relatively high socio-economic deprivation as well as more affluent areas.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers and teachers should use learners' assessment data and feedback on assignments more effectively to set more specific and challenging targets for learners aged 16 to 18 to help them make better progress and improve their achievement.
- Ensure that recent actions taken to improve learners' attendance and punctuality are sustained so that learners' attendance is good across all curriculum areas.
- Ensure that learners on study programmes have similar opportunities to benefit from work placements and other work-related learning activities across all curriculum areas.
- Accelerate the rate of improvement in apprentices' achievements through careful planning of more frequent assessment and close monitoring of individual progress. Ensure that employers are more directly involved in the planning of training and review of progress.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning and increase learners' progress by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan and use appropriate activities and resources in lessons to meet the different abilities of all learners, and ensure that learners make the best use of the time available
 - improving teachers' skills in checking learners' depth of understanding and helping learners to extend and apply their knowledge
 - sharing the existing good practice evident in the better-performing subjects so that all teachers develop skills and confidence in implementing new strategies and approaches to enliven teaching in their own subjects.
- Ensure that all teachers have the skills and confidence to integrate and develop English and especially mathematics in their own subjects to improve learners' development of these skills, particularly at level 2.
- Collect and analyse comprehensive data on learners' progression to employment to support the evaluation of how well the curriculum meets local needs and help future planning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior managers carried out a wide-ranging review of the quality of programmes in the college at the end of the 2014/15 academic year, when they recognised that achievements were not improving quickly or consistently enough. The resulting self-assessment report is highly analytical; however, the grading awarded does not fully reflect the impact of weaknesses identified. Managers did not give sufficient consideration to the impact of the lower achievement rates that affected around one third of learners, when assessing the overall quality of their provision.
- Senior leaders took decisive action to restructure the apprenticeship provision which they recognised was inadequate. They replaced managers, implemented extensive staff development to support assessors and provided extra support for apprentices to enable them to achieve their qualifications. While these actions are beginning to have a positive impact, achievements for apprentices completing their programme in 2015/16 are set to remain low. Managers are not yet managing assessors well enough to ensure they are assessing apprentices often enough to ensure they make rapid progress.
- At the beginning of the current academic year, the new team of senior managers introduced a challenging programme of staff development designed to refresh teachers' skills and improve learners' progress and achievement. The programme provides intensive coaching and support to encourage teachers to try out more creative approaches to teaching and learning. Learning mentors act as an effective 'critical friend' to support teachers to reflect on their practice. However, while this programme is beginning to bring about improvements in teaching and learning, and teachers are enthusiastic about the new approaches, not all are yet confident or skilled in applying these in their own teaching.
- Enhanced arrangements for observing teaching and learning this year include a wider range of quality measures, such as monitoring attendance and learners' attainment, and ensure that managers focus on the aspects most in need of improvement. Managers do not monitor the quality of tutorials in the same rigorous way that they do lessons.
- Leaders and curriculum managers regularly review the performance of each curriculum area. Leaders challenge managers effectively, drawing on a range of evidence to substantiate or challenge managers' own evaluations. This evidence includes findings from lesson observations on how well teachers are using the skills developed through the professional development programme, learners' feedback on the quality of their lessons and data on learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications. Where teachers are judged to be underperforming, or making insufficient improvement in their work, managers are well supported by senior colleagues to follow capability processes, and a few staff have left the college as a result of these actions.
- Senior leaders work closely with strategic partners such as the borough council, other education and training providers, large employers and the local enterprise partnership to plan the curriculum. For example, managers have reduced the college's AS-level provision where this could be better provided by partner organisations. Council leaders value how the close and well-established relationship with the college supports its actions to attract investment, rebuild communities and provide a route for employers to recruit well-trained new staff and further develop existing workers. College learners have been involved in several of these regeneration projects, including helping to design and run a newly developed arts centre and recreational space.
- Leaders have managed resources well, enabling them to plan medium- and longer-term investment in projects to meet the priority needs of the area. Senior leaders are contributing actively and positively to the regional review of post-16 education and training to reduce duplication in courses offered and make the best use of specialisms and expertise.
- The most vulnerable learners, including those for whom the college receives high-needs funding and those who are, or have recently been, looked after, achieve particularly well on their courses because of the good support from staff, outside agencies and their peers. Learners are well informed about progression opportunities and pathways such as higher education, employment or apprenticeships, and are confident about making informed decisions about their next steps. However, while managers have comprehensive data on those learners progressing within the college or to university, they have identified the need to improve the collection and analysis of information for learners moving into employment.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governors have a good understanding of current strengths and weaknesses and what actions senior leaders and managers are taking to secure improvement, particularly in apprenticeship provision. They

use their good range of complementary skills to support college leaders in planning the strategic direction for the college and in monitoring progress, and are ambitious for improvement.

- Governors challenge leaders appropriately to demonstrate the impact of improvement actions, although they were too optimistic about the extent and consistency of progress being made for 16- to 18-year-olds in 2014/15.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Managers use appropriate recruitment checks for new staff to confirm their suitability to work with young people and vulnerable adults. They have good links with a range of external agencies in most of their neighbouring councils and make referrals where necessary to ensure child protection measures are secure. Governors have taken a strong lead on safeguarding. Leaders and governors have worked with the borough on its priority to counter extremism several years before implementing the 'Prevent' duty became a requirement for further education providers. All staff have received training on recognising and supporting learners who are at risk of radicalisation or extremism. Staff discuss related themes with learners who can articulate well the concept of fundamental British values and how they are incorporated into the college values. They develop their understanding of the democratic process through elections to the learners' council. Members of the learners' council and learners on some courses understand well the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism but this is not consistent across all courses.
- Learners on both main campuses have access to a room for quiet reflection, contemplation and prayer; these rooms are suitably welcoming to learners of all faiths or none. Learners know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet or social media sites, and where to turn to for support when they need it. The learners' council initiated action over the last two years to support the introduction of better security arrangements in college through the use of identity lanyards and highly visible security staff. They value their regular meetings with the principal and senior leaders which provide opportunities to influence this and other aspects of college life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good across different subjects to ensure that learners make good or better progress in their studies. Most teachers know their learners well but do not always use the detailed information from initial assessments to plan learning to take account of learners' different abilities and skills. Too often, they plan the same tasks and activities regardless of whether this best meets the needs of individual learners. In lessons and tutorial reviews of learners' progress, too few teachers set effective time-bound and measurable targets for learners' improvement. Teachers do not always ensure that assignment completion and revision sessions are sufficiently planned to make certain that learners make best use of the available time.
- Many teachers pay close attention to the development of learners' use of English, for example the correct use of subject-specific and technical language, but not enough place sufficient emphasis on learners developing an appropriately high standard of written English. Additionally, teachers do not correct learners' punctuation and grammar in assignment work carefully enough. As a result, learners' writing skills are often underdeveloped which hinders their ability to clearly articulate their own ideas in ways that will enable them to succeed in further study or employment, for example in writing clear records of clients' treatments or formally responding to a client's business proposal. Adult learners have too few opportunities to improve mathematical skills through their vocational subjects and apprentices do not practise these skills enough in their workplace to help them improve more quickly.
- While most teachers and assessors give comprehensive verbal feedback to learners and apprentices and engage in detailed professional discussions on how to improve, not all record accurately the targets for improvement or identify clearly how best learners and apprentices can improve their skills and knowledge. Teachers and assessors rely too much on learners and apprentices remembering the details of their targets and the actions required for improvement and not all are able to do so.
- Not all teachers check learners' knowledge and understanding well enough or establish the depth of learners' knowledge sufficiently. In many instances, teachers do not allow learners sufficient time to reflect on their answer or teachers answer the question themselves.
- In many lessons teachers place a high focus on learners developing good professional standards of working and the strong promotion of safe working practices in workshops and the workplace. On these occasions, learning is often lively and fun with learners debating and discussing subjects thoughtfully and well. For example, in an architecture lesson, learners reviewed and critiqued final-year learners' work against the qualification standards and made recommendations for further improvement.

- Learners benefit from, and value highly, the professional experience and often extensive expertise of their teachers. Many teachers are adept at linking theoretical concepts to their practical application, for example enabling learners to use their knowledge of muscle tissue damage to apply appropriate sports massage techniques to help treat sporting injuries.
- The majority of teachers monitor learners' progress closely across all aspects of their programmes and take effective action should learners fall behind. Consequently, most learners are making the expected progress and in a minority of areas, for example in beauty therapy, science and information and communication technology (ICT), are making good progress.
- Teachers and learners make good use of the college intranet to reinforce and extend learning. Most teachers use information and communication technology to enhance and extend learning effectively. For example, in plumbing workshop classes, learners reinforce their understanding of practical tasks by using their mobile phones to scan 'Quick Reference' codes linked to video clips.
- Specialist support for learners who require extra help with their studies is good and enables them to make good progress in their learning. Staff integrate learners with high needs expertly into vocational and academic programmes at all levels. Hearing-impaired learners are particularly well supported by well qualified signers who ensure that learners participate fully in lessons and make good progress. While the central support team provides detailed information on specific strategies and techniques to support learners with high needs effectively, a minority of teachers do not make sufficient use of these when they plan learning and assessment.
- Learners are tolerant and respectful of their teachers and peers. Teachers are skilful in ensuring that learners from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds quickly settle into life at college and work harmoniously and well together both in and outside of lessons. Teachers often draw well on learners' different backgrounds and cultures to discuss and share their experiences and enhance their understanding of other cultures and faiths. For example, in an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) lesson, the teacher encouraged learners to discuss different religious festivals and the use of symbols to represent these.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

- Although the college has a strong focus on improving attendance, learners' attendance in lessons, including English and mathematics lessons, is not yet consistently high and varies too much between and within subject areas. Too many learners arrive late for their lessons, which has a negative impact on their learning and progress and sometimes disrupts learning for others. The college's 'new term new start' strategy was successful in helping a significant number of learners to achieve high rates of attendance throughout the spring term; a large proportion of these learners have sustained improved attendance in the current term.
- The development of learners' skills in English and mathematics is not sufficiently effective across all learning programmes. Learners do not develop their writing skills sufficiently and opportunities for adult learners to develop and use their skills in mathematics across their courses require improvement.
- The college works with external partners to provide a good range of work-related learning activities across the curriculum. In the current year, learners worked on group projects and presentations with employers as part of an extended induction period, which culminated in the successful 'HarrowExpo' during the autumn term, where learners presented their work to the rest of the college.
- However, the extent to which learners on study programmes are well prepared for employment varies too much across different curriculum areas. Opportunities for learners to benefit from external work placements are not sufficiently equitable for learners across the range of study programmes. For example, in health and social care and ICT, a large majority of learners benefit from attending work placements. However, very few learners in construction or art and design currently have opportunities for external placements. Senior managers do not have a comprehensive overview of learners' participation in external work placements and wider work-related learning to identify these differences across the college and target improvements effectively.
- Tutorials are not always useful to learners. In response to learners' feedback, managers have placed greater emphasis on individual, rather than group, tutorials this year and one-to-one work with learners is generally good. However, teachers do not plan well enough, or make sufficiently effective arrangements for learners in tutorials, when the individual work is taking place. Too often, learners do not make good enough use of this time or are released early from tutorials without being set work to complete. Where teachers use tutorial time for revision or for learners to complete their formally assessed work, they do not

always plan and manage this effectively. The college is reorganising tutorial support from September 2016.

- Apprentices improve their self-confidence at work and many work with minimum supervision. They demonstrate good attitudes at work and have good customer service skills.
- Learners behave well and demonstrate respect for staff and each other. They feel safe at the college and are clear about how to report any concerns. They value the effective arrangements for site security, develop a good knowledge of how to work safely online and know how to report any concerns. Learners' understanding of the college's duty to prevent radicalisation and extremism and the promotion of British values is not yet consistently well developed across all curriculum areas.
- Learners enjoy and benefit from a wide range of well-attended enrichment activities, which they also help to organise and run. Learners who attend broaden their understanding of improving their own safety, health and welfare, as well as their appreciation of wider social issues. Managers do not have a comprehensive picture of which curriculum areas the learners who attend come from to enable staff to improve further learners' take-up of activities.
- The successful work of the elected student council representatives demonstrates good practice for all learners on the positive implementation of democratic values at the college. Their work has secured improvements for learners, for example with regard to improving security arrangements. In addition, the student representatives have significantly improved their own organisational and marketing skills, their social and teamworking skills, as well as their confidence in their own abilities.
- Staff provide good pastoral support for learners, which helps them to overcome any difficulties which may affect their learning. Learners also benefit from effective and impartial information, advice and guidance, including specialist careers advice on a wide range of options, including employment, apprenticeships and higher education. Learners appreciate the help they receive to prepare for job applications and interviews, to write their curriculum vitae or to apply to university. Most learners are clear about their planned progression.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes achieve less well than adults, and the successful completion of their qualifications has been below average for each of the last three years. In 2014/15, learners on level 1 study programmes achieved at a higher rate than those on level 2 and 3 programmes. Around one quarter of enrolments for 16- to 18-year-olds are on level 3 academic or vocational programmes and these learners made less progress than expected compared to their prior attainment.
- Managers recognised that achievements for learners aged 16 to 18 required improvement. As identified in the self-assessment report, rates of successful completion of qualification varied between different subject areas and some differences remained between the achievement of different groups of learners by ethnicity and learning difficulty or disability.
- Managers have invested a significant amount of time and resource to improve provision and outcomes, particularly through staff development to improve teaching and learning and increase learners' progress and achievement. Much of this is still at a relatively early stage of development, and while improvement strategies are beginning to have a positive impact, this is not yet fully evident across all study programmes.
- In-year course completion rates have improved overall in most curriculum areas compared with a similar time in the previous year, with marked improvements in a few curriculum areas with low retention rates last year, particularly health and social care, and hair, beauty and sports; the vast majority of learners complete their courses. Improved systems to record and monitor learners' progress are helping managers to identify concerns and provide additional support more quickly. For example, in business courses where learners did not achieve well last year, managers have identified learners at risk of not achieving their qualifications and are monitoring their attendance at additional workshops to help them catch up with their assignments.
- Managers are monitoring learners' achievement closely; while they are confident about in-year improvements, inconsistencies remain and it is too early to know if all learners predicted to achieve will actually do so. Assessment records sampled across several of the largest curriculum areas show a marked variation in the extent of learners' completion of units, assignments or practical tests.
- Achievement of apprenticeships dropped sharply in 2014/15. Significant changes to the management of this provision are beginning to have a positive impact and current apprentices are now making better

progress. While achievement rates are already better than in the previous year, they are set to remain below average in 2015/16. Managers acknowledge they still have much to do to raise apprentices' achievements further. Current apprentices and their employers can describe the new skills being learned and the benefit apprentices bring to the workplace; as a result, several apprentices have gained promotion or increased responsibilities.

- Achievements for adult learners have improved steadily over the last three years and are now above average for this age group. A large number of adults are on ESOL courses, particularly at entry level and level 1, and they achieve very well. Learners improve their speaking and writing skills, build their confidence to integrate better in their communities and are helped to prepare to progress to further learning or seek work. Adults studying AS and A levels and Access to HE courses also achieve well. There is very little difference in the achievement of different groups of adults, by ethnicity, disability or gender. However, achievements for adults taking more substantial qualifications at level 2 and 3 are below the averages for similar providers.
- Standards of adult learners' written work are good in most subject areas. Learners studying hairdressing and beauty therapy learn new and advanced techniques to carry out a range of treatments for clients. On childcare courses, learners develop a good understanding of the skills and attributes that employers require. Assessment records indicate that the majority of adults are making good progress towards achieving their qualifications.
- High-quality care and support enables learners with high levels of additional needs to achieve well; almost all of those on mainstream courses achieve their qualifications. Learners in care, or who are leaving care, also achieve very well. Learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop greater independence in their learning which builds their confidence and prepares them well for their next steps. Learners in discrete provision develop good practical skills, for example in cooking, arts and crafts, and using computers.
- Learners of both age groups achieve well on ESOL courses and entry and level 1 functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, with many improving their skills and confidence. Results for level 2 functional skills and GCSE English and mathematics require further improvement. Apprentices develop appropriate English and mathematics skills to achieve their qualification, but these skills are not sufficiently developed and practised in the workplace.
- The majority of learners progress successfully to further study, employment or training. A high proportion of learners who apply to higher education are successful, with an increasing number securing places at prestigious universities. Rates of progression to higher levels of study within the college are good, particularly between entry level and level 1, and level 2 to level 3. However, managers acknowledge that they do not yet have a comprehensive and detailed record of learners' progression to employment; plans are in place to improve the collation of this data for the cohort leaving college this year.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- At the time of the inspection there were 1,863 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 on a wide range of study programmes in 14 subject areas, accounting for around one third of all learners in the college. The largest subject areas are preparation for life and work, science, business, health and social care, and ICT.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the range of study programmes; it varies too much between and within curriculum areas. Managers have implemented actions to improve teaching and learning on study programmes and staff work diligently to improve their practice and support learners to achieve, but, as yet, the positive staff development initiatives have not had sufficient impact. Learners' attendance varies between subject areas and remains below the college target in many areas.
- Teachers have detailed and useful information on learners' prior achievement and individual learning needs but do not use this well enough to plan learning that meets learners' different needs and abilities. Not enough teaching is sufficiently demanding, work set is not always challenging enough for the level of course and the pace of learning in lessons is often slow. As a result, learners do not make the progress they are capable of. Teachers do not check sufficiently the depth of learners' understanding. In lessons where learners complete assignments, teachers do not provide sufficiently precise individual guidance to improve the quality of learners' work.
- Learners make good progress in sessions when teachers plan and structure learning carefully, give clear

instructions and check that learners understand the most important points. In examination-based courses, teachers often make effective links between the topics taught and examination requirements and techniques, which helps to prepare learners well for forthcoming examinations. In ICT, teachers use well-thought-out scenarios to help learners explore customer service in a vocational context and research different career options in the industry. On childcare courses, learners develop a good understanding of the skills and personal qualities needed to work successfully with young children. Teachers set homework topics that successfully enable learners to extend their knowledge; for example, learners in GCSE biology acquired knowledge on how plants defend themselves against pathogens and pests. Learners on ESOL courses, learners with high levels of additional needs and those in or leaving care who are on study programmes achieve very well.

- Aspects of study programmes remain underdeveloped; many learners do not have opportunities to experience external work placements to develop their employability skills and enable them to gain insights into the world of work in their subject area. Although the college offers a range of wider work-related activities, including employer visits and externally set projects and assignments, these do not always sufficiently compensate for the lack of vocationally relevant external work experience. Learners on ICT courses benefit from a good programme of talks from visiting employers that enable learners to grasp the skills and personal qualities required to gain employment in this industry; a high proportion of these learners also undertake external work placements.
- Learners appreciate being able to track the progress they make towards achieving their target grades through a recently introduced online system. Many are involved in setting their own targets, although these are often too broad to help them improve specific areas of their work. They use the college's online learning packages regularly to extend their learning and develop greater independence. Many teachers and learners make effective use of digital technology to enhance learning, for example through the use of video clips to revise for exams and website links to research career options. Most teachers provide prompt feedback on learners' coursework and guidance on how to improve.
- The development of learners' English skills in vocational lessons is not consistently good. Managers ensure that all learners on study programmes who have not yet achieved a grade C or above in GCSE English and/or mathematics have appropriate opportunities to work towards these qualifications. Learners taking entry and level 1 functional skills make good progress and achieve well, but too few achieve level 2 functional skills and GCSE English and mathematics. Some teachers mark and correct written work closely, but too often learners' errors in spelling, the inappropriate use of capitalisation and colloquialisms are not corrected to help them improve. Attendance in English and mathematics sessions is improving but remains too low in a few curriculum areas.
- Standards of learners' work meet the expected criteria but rarely exceed awarding body requirements. On some courses, work is better, for example where second-year art and design students produced good research and experimented well with different media and specialist software. Learners do not always take sufficient pride in their work; for example, learners' course files are often not well organised to help them consolidate learning and the legibility of written work and note-making skills are not always good.
- Good information, advice and guidance ensure that learners are placed on the right course at the right level. Teachers and support staff know their learners well and provide good pastoral support which helps learners overcome difficulties they may experience, both in learning and with personal issues. In one-to-one tutorials, tutors support and challenge learners effectively and check on their overall progress well. In most cases, learning support assistants, note-makers and signers use the detailed information on learners with specific needs to provide effective support.
- Staff provide impartial advice and good individual support to help learners make informed choices about progression to further study within the college, to employment or to higher education. Internal progression, from one course level to the next, is good. A high proportion of learners who apply to higher education are successful.

Adult learning programmes are good

- At the time of inspection, around 2,000 adult learners were enrolled at the college. A large number of adults study ESOL courses, with smaller numbers studying on a wide range of vocational courses, access to higher education programmes or courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; in the majority of lessons, learners enjoy a good variety of interesting activities, which engage and maintain their interest. Teachers know their learners well and most make good use of information on learners' prior achievement to tailor work to learners' different

needs and abilities; occasionally, teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' individual targets to ensure they make progress in the specific areas identified.

- Teachers record and monitor learners' progress well. Learners know the progress they are making on vocational programmes and what they need to do to complete their qualifications in the current year. Teachers on part-time ESOL courses check learners' understanding thoroughly and make good use of verbal questioning to extend learners' skills and progress in lessons. Well-planned revision exercises ensure that learners on GCSE mathematics courses are prepared well for examinations. In a small minority of courses, frequent changes in staff cause too much disruption to learners' progress, especially where learners' progress is not recorded in sufficient detail.
- Learners on ESOL programmes gain confidence in communicating verbally and in writing, and as a result become more independent in their everyday lives in their communities. Learners, particularly at entry level, make good progress in lessons and most progress to courses at the next level. Attendance in classes specifically for adults is good in most lessons and the standard of written work for the majority of adult learners is good.
- ESOL learners develop their use and understanding of English well through, for example, effective discussions on formal and informal language. In a mathematics lesson on probability, learners understood and used adverbs of frequency well, improving their understanding and use of English vocabulary. However, learners' mathematics skills are not routinely developed in lessons. Teachers on vocational courses do not use information on learners' assessed levels of English and mathematics well enough to target the topics and skills learners most need to improve.
- Adult learners studying hairdressing benefit from external work experience in salons. Employed learners have found the skills learned on their course at level 3 are useful in their workplace. Adults studying beauty therapy and childcare develop a good work ethic and demonstrate good personal and social skills when working with clients.
- Good initial advice and guidance and thorough assessment of learners' prior attainment ensure that they are placed on the level of course most suitable to their needs, interests and future aspirations. Learners receive good support throughout their courses, which helps them achieve and make informed choices about their next steps. Productive links with external partners within the community support the pastoral and welfare needs of adult learners very well.
- Learners work collaboratively and well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers promote the sharing of learners' cultures, for example through discussing differences in the way people greet each other. Learners feel safe and know who to report concerns to.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- The college has 197 apprentices currently on programme, of whom 16 are advanced apprentices. The vast majority are on health and social care and business administration programmes. Small numbers of apprentices are following programmes in hairdressing, telesales, supporting teaching and learning, warehousing and storage.
- Achievements for apprentices dropped sharply in 2014/15 and were very low. Too many did not complete within the planned timescales and around half failed to complete their apprenticeship due to the slow development of English and mathematics skills.
- Senior leaders put effective recovery measures in place for the current year, which included a full staffing restructure and recruitment programme, a reduction in the numbers of subcontractors providing apprenticeships, more effective staff development and performance management, and frequent monitoring and review of apprentices' progress by senior leaders that hold managers closely to account. New managers now in post have conducted a detailed analysis of reasons for poor performance in the past and have improved the systems for recording apprentices' progress and monitoring the quality of provision.
- Actions are already beginning to have a positive impact on improving current apprentices' progress; a small, but increasing, minority are making good progress. The number of apprenticeship completions has now almost doubled compared to the previous year, but managers recognise that the legacy of previous poor performance means that apprentices' achievements will remain below average in 2015/16.
- Managers have identified many apprentices who did not complete in previous years, but remain in employment. Managers and assessors are working with these learners to enable them to complete the few missing components of their frameworks and thus achieve their full apprenticeship qualification. Apprentices and their employers appreciate this commitment from college staff.

- Leaders and managers acknowledge that there is still much to do to improve apprentices' achievements to the expected level. Managers have not yet involved employers sufficiently in setting up training and assessment plans. Few employers contribute to progress reviews and so do not have a clear enough understanding of apprentices' progress. Trainers are knowledgeable and experienced in their subjects but do not always link theory well enough to apprentices' experiences in the workplace. Assessment is too infrequent and often starts too late in the programme to ensure apprentices achieve in the time planned.
- Target-setting at progress reviews is not precise enough to accelerate apprentices' rate of progress and enable them to meet their full potential. Assessor's feedback is often encouraging but not enough is recorded to help apprentices recall the specific areas they need to work on. Feedback seldom gives advice to those who find the work hard or provides fresh challenge to those who find it easy.
- Apprentices are not encouraged sufficiently to widen their views and opinions or broaden their awareness of working with different people beyond their current experience. When assessors discuss diversity with apprentices, this is generally prompted from a bank of unimaginative questions which are seldom relevant to apprentices' workplace experiences.
- Apprentices develop English and mathematics skills to meet the minimum levels expected for their framework, but they often develop these skills too slowly. Additional help is available in the college for those who need it, but mathematics skills are not practised further in the workplace. Apprentices' written work is of an appropriate standard but assessors are not extending these skills enough to prepare apprentices well for their next steps.
- Information and guidance is now good and ensures that apprentices are better informed of the apprenticeship requirements. Systems to recruit apprentices are now more rigorous and apprentices receive a full induction to their programme, which includes accurate assessment of prior attainment in English and mathematics as well as aptitude tests. As a result, far fewer apprentices are leaving the programme early and most are better motivated to complete their training.
- Training in the workplace is good. Supervisors use their knowledge and experience well to develop apprentices' occupational skills. Additional specialist training is provided in the workplace through short industry or legislative updates or online learning packages. Many apprentices benefit from working in organisations where they can move between different departments, which helps them choose appropriate career paths.
- Apprentices develop good attitudes and behaviour in the workplace, particularly in sectors where high-quality customer care skills are paramount. They are proud of the skills they develop and their current progress, and can discuss their work confidently and contribute well to the smooth running of the workplace. Many improve their self-confidence and self-reliance and can work with the minimum of supervision. Many employers have high expectations for their apprentices and are keen to move them on to more complex work and responsibilities as soon as they are ready. Significant numbers remain with their employer or gain promotion, although college managers do not yet monitor learners' progression in detail.
- Apprentices have an appropriate knowledge of health and safety relevant to their workplace and sector; for example, those in childcare settings are knowledgeable about how to keep young people free from harm and report and discuss issues with staff and parents. Assessors reinforce this strongly but do not always extend these discussions to the personal health and well-being of the learners themselves. Learners do not yet have a full understanding of the potential risks posed by radicalisation or extremism.

Provision for learners with high needs

is good

- The college has 161 learners with high needs, of whom 28 study within a discrete centre for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the remainder study on mainstream programmes across the college.
- Highly effective, personalised support ensures that these learners make good progress and achieve very well. Managers have high expectations of learners and use funding effectively to ensure that learners receive the support they need to help them achieve. The college works closely with local partners, including the local authority's special educational needs and disability strategy implementation group, to increase opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the local area.
- Teachers and support staff make good use of learners' education, health and care plans to identify appropriate individual strategies to help each learner make the best possible progress towards their learning goals. Staff identify learners' different support needs very effectively, using a range of relevant information from parents and medical professionals. Collecting information on medical and physical needs

at learners' interviews ensures that the necessary support is provided promptly when learners join the college. Learners speak highly of the support they receive.

- Teachers take care to integrate learners with high needs well into lessons and they work collaboratively with their peers to share knowledge and learn from each other. The central support team provides teachers with useful and detailed guidance on different strategies they can use to support learners with high needs. For example, learners are able to take notes using mind maps and receive specialist support from note-takers and sign language interpreters. However, in mainstream classes, not all teachers make effective use of this guidance to plan learning and assessment strategies.
- Staff are well qualified; many have extensive experience in supporting high needs learners and have specialist support qualifications in areas such as autism awareness and British Sign Language. Staff also participate in relevant and regular continuing professional development activities such as training in dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorder awareness and examination training.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from very good resources in the newly built centre on the Harrow Weald campus. These include a kitchen, wet room, utility room and sensory room which help learners develop independent living skills. Staff ensure that these learners can study courses or choose units that are individualised according to their interest, including horticulture, arts and crafts, or to develop independent living skills such as looking after a home or staying healthy.
- Learners in the centre develop their English and mathematics skills well; for example, learners discuss and decide which products to make for sale in the college shop and calculate the takings from products sold. Learners can relate skills they have learned to employment. All learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on discrete provision have completed, or have planned, relevant work experience.
- Learners receive bespoke, independent careers advice which informs their choice of next steps and progression. All learners are challenged to progress to higher levels, whether that is the next level of course in the college, higher education or paid employment, as appropriate for individual learners.
- Learners improve their personal, social and employability skills very effectively. Learners demonstrate skills development in vocational areas which are at the same level as those without high needs. For example, learners confidently articulate the skills they have developed in computing and business. Learners feel safe at college and know how to report concerns should they arise.

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	7,856
Principal/CEO	Pat Carvahlo
Website address	www.harrow.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)	508	1357	477	326	916	351	10	100
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	66	115	5	11	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		1		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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Care First Ltd ■ ProActive Training 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Janet Mercer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Gadfield	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jules Steele	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector
Sherrie Dougan	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Scott	Ofsted Inspector
Kathy Tyler	Ofsted Inspector
Ray Walker	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the vice-principal curriculum and quality, 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 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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