

East Berkshire College

General further education college

Inspection dates

22–25 November 2016

| Overall effectiveness | | Requires improvement | |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement | 16 to 19 study programmes | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement | Adult learning programmes | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Requires improvement | Apprenticeships | Good |
| Outcomes for learners | Requires improvement | Provision for learners with high needs | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | | | Good |

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Senior leaders lack effective college-wide quality improvement and assurance measures to provide them with a reliable understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in all areas.
- Too few teachers provide their learners with clear constructive feedback on written work that identifies technical errors and shows them how to improve their work further.
- Too few teachers receive support to share and learn from good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Attendance has not yet risen sufficiently in all areas of the curriculum; teachers of adult learners do not challenge lateness to lessons.
- Achievement rates, though rising since 2014/15, in too many areas are still too low, with AS- and A-level achievement rates particularly low.
- Managers have not put in place an effective English and mathematics strategy to improve outcomes for learners without a grade C or above in GCSE English and/or mathematics.
- Too few vocational learners and very few learners on academic programmes benefit from real work experience.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers ensure that the college provides a secure, inclusive and harmonious environment in which learners are safe and valued.
- Apprentices benefit from highly individualised learning programmes; teachers and assessors use their good vocational experience to make learning interesting and relevant to the workplace.
- Employers express very high levels of satisfaction with the apprenticeship programme, and they provide apprentices with high-quality on-the-job learning.
- Learners on study programmes in sport, hospitality, construction, health and childcare develop very good employability skills, as do learners in receipt of high-needs funding.
- Adult learners develop their mathematics skills well and gain good employment and personal skills. They consequently play a more active part in their communities; they communicate better with their children's schools and with public services.
- Learners benefit from high-quality practical classes in which they work with focus and purpose, collaborate well and develop good employment skills.

Full report

Information about the provider

- East Berkshire College serves the towns of Langley, Windsor, Slough and Maidenhead. The college has a large cohort of 16- to 18 year-old learners on academic and/or vocational study programmes, many adult learners studying English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and a sizeable cohort of apprentices, mainly in construction and engineering.
- The proportion of residents in Slough qualified to level 2 is significantly lower than the south east and England averages. In 2016/17, 58% of 16-year-olds who enrolled at the college did not have A*-C grades in mathematics, and 50% did not have A*-C grades in English. The unemployment rate in Slough is higher than the south east rate and just above the national rate. The main regional employment is in the service sector including distribution, hospitality and public administration.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

Leaders should:

- introduce reliable, well-understood and effective college-wide quality improvement and assurance arrangements that will:
 - provide managers with an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in all areas
 - support all teachers to improve their practice so that lessons provide greater levels of stretch and challenge for all learners in all areas of the curriculum
 - support the identification and sharing of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment across curriculum and subject areas
 - support teachers to provide their learners with clear constructive feedback on written work that identifies spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, and shows learners how to improve their work further
 - support teachers to set and monitor clear, achievable targets for all learners
 - provide governors and senior leaders with a reliable and comprehensive set of measures, including data, by which they may evaluate the quality of provision and the progress being made by the college
- ensure that achievement rates continue to rise in all vocational and academic areas to a point significantly above national rates, and ensure that learners' progress from their starting points improves from current low levels for all academic and vocational level 3 programmes
- develop a clear and carefully monitored English and mathematics strategy that will improve opportunities for all learners who do not have a grade C or above in GCSE English and/or mathematics to achieve these qualifications
- ensure that all learners on vocational programmes and a greater proportion of learners on academic programmes benefit from work experience and activities that develop good employment skills

- ensure that attendance continues to rise to good levels in all areas of the curriculum, and that teachers are supported to challenge lateness to lessons
- ensure that all learners, including all apprentices, develop a secure and confident understanding of ways to keep themselves safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and of the ways that the college values expressed in the 'civility tree' correlate with British values.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and governors do not currently have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the college. As a result, they have not taken sufficient action to reduce the weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Because of a decline in the performance of the apprenticeship and A-level provision in 2014/15, leaders and governors recognised that greater oversight was required for these areas and acted to put this in place. However, the time that elapsed between recognising these problems and appointing new managers has resulted in improvements being too slow, particularly for the A-level provision.
- Managers have not dealt fully with a number of recommendations from the previous inspection, such as: the application of effective initiatives to improve learners' attendance, punctuality and progress; ensuring that all lessons are planned to stretch and challenge learners; and the raising of standards in teaching, learning and assessment across the college.
- Measures to improve attendance have not yet had sufficient impact. Managers now use data better to monitor attendance frequently, and more teachers are taking action to deal with poor attendance. Attendance is improving, but too slowly in some areas of the provision. Staff have higher expectations of their learners than in previous years, particularly within A-level provision. On these courses, new managers have taken decisive action to ensure that learners' progress and outcomes improve through higher attendance, raised standards of work, and achievement of predicted target grades.
- Managers have identified a number of key areas of weakness accurately, though they did not identify clearly weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have not always identified weaknesses quickly enough to secure improvements. Their evaluation of key areas, for example the low levels of attendance, poor learner achievement and poor progress for learners from starting points, does not involve sufficiently detailed analysis of their causes. As a result, quality improvement plans lack specific, measurable actions to improve these areas quickly enough, and lack effective measures by which to monitor progress to sustained improvement.
- The teaching and learning observation processes used by managers are insufficiently developed. Currently, there is too much focus on teaching and teacher activity, and too little attention to learners, their learning and the progress they make in class. As a result, the quality of provision for too many learners is not good.
- Managers have not put in place work experience for learners on study programmes at level 3 and do not yet ensure that all learners have the experience and information they need to make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Leaders and managers successfully communicate their ambition for the college to staff, who appreciate the clarity about the direction set. Leaders and governors have acted to ensure the sustainability of the provision over time and recognised that to do this it is necessary to work in partnership with other providers. As a result, they have identified other providers who hold similar values, and plan a merger with another college for early

2017 to secure the future of local post-16 provision. Leaders have carried out a careful analysis of the benefits and risks inherent in the merger and set plans in place to ensure that the merger will not disrupt learning.

- Because of significant investment in the estate of the college over recent years, learners benefit from excellent specialist, industry-standard resources and from high-quality accommodation that support their learning in vocational and academic areas. Extensive access to high-quality information technology supports a good number of independent learning opportunities for learners.
- Leaders, managers and governors collaborate well with employers and partners to ensure that the range and content of the provision aligns to the economic priorities of the locality and region. This has led to increased opportunities for learners to move into or remain in employment following completion of their programmes. Employers praise the college's approach and value the individualised programmes available to meet their needs.
- Managers have recently begun to use the good practice from one curriculum area to build a process for tracking individual learners' progress across the college. This is starting to have a positive impact on improving learners' outcomes, most notably in sport and public services and in health and social care.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have not been able to provide sufficient challenge to secure rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for all learners. Governors carefully scrutinise data and reports provided by senior leaders. However, leaders and managers do not analyse their data with sufficient precision to fully inform governors of the quality of the provision or the actions being taken to deal with weaknesses.
- Governors recognise the decline in performance in 2014/15 and have worked with leaders and managers to put in place actions to deal with shortcomings in management oversight. To date, these changes have not had sufficient impact on the quality of the provision.
- Governors' arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The link governor is suitably knowledgeable and experienced, providing good support and challenge to the designated safeguarding lead in the college. Governors understand their statutory duties and discharge these effectively.
- Governors have secured a strong financial base for the college and, as a result, have been able to invest extensively in industry-standard equipment and resources that help learners to develop their skills and widen their experience in preparation for employment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Learners feel safe and know whom to contact if they are worried about their own well-being, or that of others. Leaders communicate the responsibilities for safeguarding and learners' welfare well to staff and learners. Teachers are well supported with any concerns about learners' safeguarding and welfare by specialist support staff. Learners, including apprentices, demonstrate a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in practical workshops and on employers' premises.
- Leaders and managers have good relationships with specialist external agencies, including social services, the police and the local 'Prevent' board. They keep effective and detailed

safeguarding and welfare records, and these provide an auditable trail from initial referral to resolution. However, not all staff who need to see these records currently have good access to them.

- Learners receive training about British values, and about the 'Prevent' duty, at induction, through the tutorial system and through reference to the college 'civility tree', which is widely and actively promoted, but this is not fully effective for all learners. The majority of learners are able to talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about these areas, whereas others do not recall fully what they have been taught. Leaders have been working with the local 'Prevent' coordinator for some time to plan a major awareness-raising event centred on British values, the dangers of radicalisation, use of social media and online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment still varies too much between sites, subjects and provision types and is not reliably good for all learners. Leaders and managers have introduced a range of improvement measures to develop staff skills and boost learners' progress, but these have yet to improve the quality of provision and learners' outcomes in all areas.
- Teachers plan activities well for whole classes, but do not always plan learning effectively for individuals, especially learners of higher ability. In a minority of classes, more able learners, or those who worked faster, sat waiting some time for their next task. Too often, further learning activities are presented as extension work for those who were getting through tasks quickly, rather than as work which is demanding enough to challenge and extend the knowledge of more able learners.
- A small minority of teachers do not always check learners' understanding effectively during theory sessions. These teachers do not assess learners' progress in each stage of lessons thoroughly or ensure that learners are ready to move on to the next concept or topic. In a small number of lessons, the pace of learning was slow. Not all staff use the wide range of available resources to make their lessons interesting and stimulating, or to help learners in ways that suit them.
- Staff do not always populate individual learning plans with initial or diagnostic assessment findings so that teachers can use this information to plan learning well. Not all staff ensure that every learner knows how well they are doing on their courses, or what they need to do to achieve better grades and improve their work.
- The quality of assessment feedback varies too much across sectors and provision types. For example, in construction, feedback is often descriptive rather than evaluative, whereas in childcare and hospitality feedback it is highly evaluative and tells learners how to improve. Teachers in information computing technology courses track and monitor learners' responses to feedback well, whereas the quality of feedback on level 3 engineering learners' work is variable, and several had incomplete work in their folders.
- Learners work with real purpose and focus in practical sessions. Most enjoy their learning and are fully engaged. They mostly model attitudes and behaviours appropriate to their vocational sector, for example hospitality learners wearing smart chef whites and hats, referring to their cooking teacher as 'chef', or, in hair and beauty, wearing salon-style

clothes and/or professional uniforms. Teachers emphasise frequently the expectations and responsibilities of learners when they will be working in the sector.

- Teachers use work experience well to prepare learners for employment in hospitality, hairdressing and construction. For example, mixed groups of level 1 and level 2 learners on a catering course worked well together to prepare dishes such as teriyaki chicken kebabs and pear frangipani for sale in the college's commercial restaurant. All were new dishes for these learners, who made good progress. Level 1 carpentry learners were supported well to make dove and scarf joints accurately and will use these to make casements in future lessons.
- Teachers and support staff promote good awareness and understanding of health and safety in practical workshops. For example, learners wear the correct personal protective equipment in plumbing and carpentry workshops, brickwork learners are aware of the risks of working at height on scaffolding, and carpentry learners use sharp hand tools carefully and safely.
- Learners appreciate and benefit from wide availability of e-tablets and laptops that they can borrow to research projects and assignments outside of the classroom. They also benefit from a good range and quality of resources in the learning resource centre; as a result, they work well on their projects independently.
- Staff use initial and diagnostic assessments effectively to place most learners onto the right course. Staff accurately identify those learners who need additional learning support, either at induction or when a specific concern arises. However, initial assessment is not effective at identifying accurately the starting points of learners with high needs; a small number of learners are not on the most appropriate courses for them, and staff do not always have a holistic picture of learners' abilities or progress.
- Teachers and managers increasingly monitor the progress of study programmes learners well through their core qualifications. They know with increasing accuracy which learners are falling behind and why, for example because of poor levels of application or attendance, or because of personal difficulties. Managers and teachers implement strategies to support these learners with mixed success; for example, they have a less accurate picture of the progress of learners in English or in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- The standards of learners' work vary too much across courses and levels. Learners mostly produce work of a high standard and staff are increasingly encouraging learners to strive to produce better work. However, not enough of the most able learners are yet doing this. Practical work for 16- to 18-year-olds and apprentices is mostly of a higher standard than theory work
- Learners' attendance at lessons has improved from very low levels in 2015/16, but overall still falls short of the college's target. More departments now have high attendance for 16- to 18-year-old learners than have low attendance. However, attendance by adult learners is still too low and attendance in functional skills mathematics classes is particularly low. Managers do not review trends in attendance by different groups in order to ensure that they are targeting their interventions well. They do not, for example, monitor learners' attendance at tutorials, the attendance of those

in receipt of additional learning support or routinely review the attendance of learners at different levels.

- Leaders and managers have not developed a clearly expressed strategy for identifying and improving learners' English and mathematics skills. Consequently, too few lessons for learners aged 16 to 18 are of a high enough standard.
- Too few learners at level 3 benefit from work experience placements that will allow them to extend their skills and employability. Staff introduce learners at level 1 very well to the skills they need to develop for employment, and most learners at level 2 benefit from the work experience that the college arranges for them.
- Where staff have forged links with local employers they use these well to provide learners with an insight into the world of work. Most curriculum areas take their learners to visit local companies and arrange visits from a good range of employers to the college. For example, a military drill sergeant introduces public services learners to parade training and local hoteliers talk to travel and tourism students about working in the hospitality industry.
- Learners enthusiastically take up the wide range of sporting opportunities on offer. These include activities designed for learners with disabilities and innovative sports designed to capture the interest of those who have not participated in sports before.
- Learners on study programmes receive good impartial advice and guidance on their career choices and next steps. However, adult learners do not receive guidance on future study and careers until late in their course and neither adults nor learners with high needs receive enough advice and guidance from specialist careers staff.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, overall achievement across all programmes requires improvement so that the vast majority of learners achieve at or above national rates and make the progress from starting points of which they are capable.
- Leaders and governors have put in place a number of measures to improve learners' achievements, and these are starting to show a positive impact, particularly for learners on level 2 vocational certificate and level 3 vocational diploma programmes and for adult learners on accredited ESOL programmes, which make up around 70% of learners.
- However, achievements on AS- and A-level courses continue at low levels and too few learners achieve the main qualifications of their academic study programmes. Adult learners on Access to Higher Education programmes did not achieve well in 2014/15 or 2015/16. Too few learners achieve their qualifications in functional skills, and the proportion who achieve grades A* to C at GCSE in both English and mathematics is too low.
- Managers have taken very effective action to improve achievement rates for apprentices, strengthening management, introducing functional skills earlier and enhancing recruitment and selection procedures. This has significantly improved overall and timely achievement in 2015/16 to be just above the national rate for the previous year. Learners in construction, business administration and hairdressing, and advanced-level apprentices, achieve well. Managers now monitor learners' progress towards achievement more frequently and thoroughly. However, achievement in motor vehicle, health and social care

and improving operational performance requires improvement, as does achievement by intermediate- and higher-level apprentices and those aged over 24. These groups account for around 40% of all apprenticeship leavers in 2015/16.

- Managers across the provision either do not have access to, or do not routinely use, data about performance by different groups early enough to identify gaps and take rapid actions to narrow these. For example, managers did not recognise the need to improve achievement by apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities, and women.
- The majority of learners develop good skills for life and employment. Apprentices gain promotion at work, start successful businesses or progress to higher education; adult learners participate in communities more readily, and support their children better in schools; and learners in a minority of study programme areas develop good employment skills where work experience exists or where strong links are in place with employers. However, progression across course levels is not strong, with too few learners succeeding on AS-level courses and progressing to A levels, and only half the intermediate-level apprentices who achieved their qualification last year progressing onto the advanced programme.
- Learners' progress from their starting points requires improvement for most AS- and A-level courses and a significant minority of vocational level 3 programmes.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college provides study programmes in most subject areas, for nearly 2,200 learners aged 16 to 19, from entry level to level 3, with just over half at level 3. Courses are taught at each of the college's main sites. The largest subject areas are construction, science and mathematics, health and care, ICT and humanities, and significantly more learners study vocational courses than A-level courses.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough across all course types and requires improvement. This is reflected in the low overall achievement of learners on study programmes and the poor progress that many make, based on their starting points when they join the college. Managers do ensure that there is a significant amount of good provision on study programmes, especially on vocational programmes.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies too much between subjects and programmes. Of particular note is the poorer quality of teaching and learning for the large amount of science and mathematics provision at the Windsor site, and GCSE English and mathematics.
- In a significant minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure that activities meet the needs of all individuals, to promote best progress, including for the more able. This tendency to teach learners just to achieve a pass, rather than maximise their progress, is identified by the college as an area for improvement, and it contributes to the poor achievement of level 3 high grades, especially at A level.
- Teaching and assessment in GCSE English and mathematics do not help learners to precisely identify and improve on the skills and knowledge they have yet to master. While there has been some improvement in the progress learners make, too few attain a better grade compared with their starting point, especially in mathematics.

- Managers and teachers do not ensure that all learners develop their personal, social and employability skills well enough. Work experience is not available for all vocational courses and where it is, not all learners benefit from it. Where work experience is an integral part of a course such as in sport, childcare and hairdressing, learners develop their employability skills well.
- Attendance and punctuality are not yet consistently high. Where attendance is high, learners achieve well and make good progress, as is the case with the arts, social sciences and humanities, whereas in English, mathematics, media and tutorial sessions, which have poorer attendance, they do not.
- Too few learners are confident in their understanding of how to keep themselves safe from extremism and radicalisation. Across study programmes, learners have varying levels of confidence and knowledge about the training and information they received relating to the 'Prevent' duty.
- In the better provision, both for vocational and A-level courses, teachers do ensure that learners make good progress in their lessons and develop good practical skills and knowledge. Teachers make good use of planned extension activities to provide challenging opportunities for more-capable learners to develop their understanding. For example, level 3 business learners worked individually on an assignment to explore the management organisation of a private and public sector organisation. Depending on their progress, each had the opportunity to build on the early stages of their work with extension tasks on the organisation's strategic planning. For many learners on highly practical courses, such as art and design, catering and hairdressing, teachers make very good use of individual tasks to help each learner to maximise progress.
- In vocational courses and on some AS- and A-level courses, teachers ensure that assessment is effective and helps learners to improve their skills, knowledge and the standard of their work. For example, in psychology, learners use feedback from previously submitted work along with annotated notes to improve the standard of their writing. In childcare and business, learners use teachers' feedback to ensure that their assignments are of a standard that matches their aspirational target grade. However, in other AS- and A-level courses, especially in science and mathematics, the feedback learners get on their work does not help them to improve.
- Teachers and specialist college staff ensure that learners have a good understanding of potential career routes following their studies. This is especially the case for learners on significantly work-related courses, such as hospitality and catering, and hairdressing and beauty, but is also evident across the wide range of courses. Learners benefit from good impartial careers guidance, enabling them to make informed choices about their next steps. For example, learners often have a good awareness of the opportunities presented by progression to apprenticeships.
- Learners receive sound support from their teachers and specialist staff in making their applications for higher education, although too few, given the large number of level 3 learners on academic study programmes, successfully progress to higher education.
- Managers ensure that learners often benefit from a range of enrichment activities, especially those that help them develop relevant subject-specific skills. More widely, the college's initiatives to involve learners in sports activities are highly successful.
- Learners are mostly well behaved and respectful of one another and their teachers.

Learners work safely and they understand how the college is able to support them and their peers to stay safe. Most learners have a good understanding of the college's 'civility tree' values and the behaviours expected of them in college.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The majority of adult provision consists of ESOL courses, with smaller numbers of mathematics and English courses. Most ESOL courses are designed to support adults to develop useful and relevant skills that improve their employability. Adult learning courses require improvement because attendance and punctuality are poor in too many lessons, and too few learners work at a pace and level which ensure that they achieve to their highest ability. Courses do, however, frequently develop learners' confidence and skills and help them to play a more active part in society.
- Attendance is low and this negatively affects learners' progress and achievement. Attendance during inspection was low, at around 80%. Attendance for English and mathematics courses is particularly low, though this year's attendance shows a small improvement on 2015/16 figures.
- Punctuality is poor in too many lessons, and teachers do not challenge sufficiently the many learners who arrive late for their lessons. Poor attendance and punctuality contribute particularly to the low achievement rates for functional skills and GCSE learners.
- Initial assessments of learners' skills when they join the college are not used to plan learning programmes that always meet their needs and deal with the specific skills gaps that have previously prevented them achieving qualifications in a timely fashion or gaining employment.
- Teachers do not always identify learners' individual needs with sufficient accuracy, and therefore progress is too slow in a significant minority of lessons. A minority of learners' assessments are too easy, and in many mixed-level groups the learners receive the same work so too many of them experience too little challenge. For example, in a mixed-level functional skills mathematics group, all learners were working at the same tasks at the same pace.
- Too few learners have their work systematically or regularly checked for errors. Where teachers do mark learners' work the errors are not used effectively to direct further work and to tackle key gaps in the learners' skills. In addition, when learners do receive feedback from teachers, it does not always clearly link to skills development.
- Teachers do not monitor the progress of learners effectively and, as a result, cannot plan learning activities that meet needs well. Poor progress monitoring also restricts learners' understanding of their own steps towards their targets, and limits their ability to study independently or focus on developing or practising particular skills between classes.
- Learners do not always benefit from careers guidance that would help them to build on their achievement and develop clear plans. However, through attending their courses the learners are developing skills in teamwork, problem-solving and concentration skills. Managers intend to enrich the adult programme with employability and citizenship skills in the near future, but these are not yet in place.
- Leaders strongly encourage adults to gain GCSE qualifications in English and

mathematics. Where this is not appropriate, learners attend functional skills courses that help them to develop practical and transferable skills. Learners benefit from progression opportunities within the college, for example, one learner who joined at entry level progressed onto advanced-level courses in mathematics and science. Another learner who joined at level 2 has moved on to university to study accountancy.

- Through the Access to Higher Education programme, adults return to study and move successfully on to nursing and social work careers. Access learners develop good skills for employment and higher study, for example during one lesson all learners were able to synthesise the summary of a government report and compare it to the findings of their own surveys. The pre-access course offers a useful return to study skills alongside English, mathematics and computer skills for adults who have been away from study for some years.
- For many learners, their courses have motivated them to raise their aspirations, improve their employment prospects or move on to higher education. For example, one learner currently working as a shop assistant now aims to become a teaching assistant. Another learner intends to go to university to study social work following successful completion of an adult learning course. Following their courses, many learners have greater confidence in engaging with their communities, in using public transport and in talking to their children's teachers.
- Learners feel safe and enjoy the college's secure and inclusive environment. They show respect and consideration for each other and for their teachers. In classes and around the college they help and support each other well. However, not all learners demonstrate a clear understanding of the 'Prevent' agenda and of college safeguarding priorities.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Learners benefit from programmes that are designed well to meet their particular skills needs. Lecturers also plan lessons carefully to ensure that learners gain the skills they need for their job roles. For example, in a domestic heating lesson, learners undertook a good range of tasks to improve their knowledge of health and safety symbols on fire extinguishers.
- Most tutors use their good vocational experience to make learning interesting and relevant to the workplace. Lecturers and assessors demonstrate concepts and processes very effectively, encouraging learners to experiment with different techniques. For example, hairdressing learners practised different ways of sectioning and cutting hair to refine and improve their own skills, and a motor vehicle assessor drew on recent industry training to increase a learner's understanding of how to work safely on hybrid cars.
- Employers and supervisors provide learners with good training at work. This helps learners acquire skills quickly and become valuable employees. Many employers fund additional qualifications to help learners take on more varied tasks at work and enhance their promotion prospects. This includes air conditioning and wheel alignment external training for motor vehicle learners and end-of-life and nutrition courses for care workers.
- Learners develop their English and mathematics skills effectively. Most assessors and vocational lecturers link English and mathematics learning well to pertinent workplace situations. They routinely check learners' spelling and grammar, encouraging them to use

good English and technical language correctly. However, teaching in discrete functional skills lessons is less effective. In mathematics, learners complete generic worksheets that do not develop their knowledge in a vocational context.

- Teachers give learners frequent feedback during lessons. This affirms the accuracy of their work and helps them to rectify mistakes quickly. For example, by receiving early feedback, engineering learners changed the steps within process charts at an early stage enabling them to reach the correct final answer. Learners enjoy their coursework and work purposefully on assignments and projects. They take great pride in their work, much of which is well presented and of a good standard.
- Employers express high levels of satisfaction with the apprenticeship programme and support from college managers and assessors. They identify good business benefits from hiring apprentices, particularly in helping build capacity within their organisations. As a result, learners develop good vocational and personal skills and confidence.
- The majority of current learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications on time, particularly in construction, most engineering courses and in hairdressing. Managers took very effective action to increase timely achievement, which now means that more learners achieve English and mathematics qualifications earlier in their programme.
- Learners have a good understanding of health and safety, and teachers promote safe working in lessons and workshops. They check learners' understanding of how to stay safe and are diligent in ensuring that they wear personal protective equipment.
- A small number of learners have lengthy gaps between assessments, and this slows their progress and achievement. A minority of teachers and assessors give learners insufficient developmental feedback following assessment, and they fail to tell learners how they can improve their work or skills. Too often, learners complete the same activities and at the same pace, regardless of their ability. A minority of teaching on the higher-level apprenticeship is at too low a level and lacks the depth to hold learners' interest.
- Lecturers and assessors do not promote equality or diversity effectively in lessons and progress reviews. Because of this, learners do not always broaden their understanding of cultural differences. A significant minority of learners behave disruptively within lessons. Lecturers do not always challenge learners who swear in class, arrive late or distract their peers. They often struggle to deal with group dynamics, particularly where learners from different subjects come together for one lesson.
- Learners have insufficient understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and their awareness of how to stay safe online requires improvement. Lecturers and assessors do not discuss these topics sufficiently during lessons or progress reviews to raise learners' awareness of how 'Prevent' legislation applies to them.

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

- Staff do not make effective use of initial assessments to place learners on the right programmes. Interviews are held, tests are taken and tutors make records, but information is not brought together well to provide a clear view of what learners have achieved and what their plans are for the future.
- Staff do not make good use of objectives in learners' education, health and care plans

and statements, to set achievable and time-bound targets for learners. As a result, for the majority of learners, target-setting is weak. Managers have identified this weakness and established a new post of transition coordinator to link with local authorities and improve the setting and use of targets.

- In a significant minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure sufficient dynamic or practical interaction to hold learners' attention. Teachers do not plan tasks and activities that are demanding enough for a small minority of learners, who become disengaged. A small minority of teachers and other staff are overprotective and learners are held back from achieving independence skills quickly.
- Staff do not identify and monitor effectively the progress that learners are making. Their recording of personal skills such as improved social interaction, confidence and self-esteem requires improvement. Managers have very recently begun directing staff to set clear, manageable targets to improve the recording of progress.
- Learners receive only limited specialist impartial information advice and guidance. Managers have identified this weakness in provision, and recently referred a minority of learners for these services. It is too soon to see significant impact in these changes.
- Most staff use their experience effectively to plan teaching and learning well. Learners find most of the lessons interesting and staff maintain a strong focus on employability skills within activities and lessons.
- Teachers integrate mathematics and English well into the learning programmes and most learners make good progress in these areas. Most learners are able to use dictionaries well and teachers check and stimulate comprehension of words. Learners engage well with practical tasks, such as how to measure capacity, count items or list products, and staff relate these well to possible future employment, for example when working in a food outlet or in a pharmacy.
- Staff provide good support, particularly effectively managed at the start of learners' programmes, so that the large majority settle well and support is appropriately reduced to promote independence. Teachers and support staff know learners well. Support workers are very effective, for example in skilfully using open questions that keep learners focused on the tasks and encourage them to think more widely about topics such as safety online, or why hygiene is important when preparing food.
- Enthusiastic and caring staff provide effective bespoke support according to individual needs. Personal support for learners is exceptionally effective in helping learners with high levels of need on mainstream courses make good progress.
- Learners enjoy good-quality work-placements and they develop good employability skills, but there are no opportunities at present for internships. When learners go on work placements employers report that learners 'blossom' and that their communication skills improve greatly. The majority of learners go on to secure employment at their work placements, including in retail, administration and horticulture.
- Records of risk assessments undertaken on learners are too brief. Staff do not undertake their own full risk assessments, but rather accept the employers', usually thorough, risk assessments. However, staff do check carefully on learners' well-being throughout the placements and learners are safe at the placements.
- Learners at the Windsor site do not benefit from the same range of enrichment activities

as those at Langley. For example, learners can play football and other sports at Langley, but not at Windsor. Arrangements to access facilities between the sites are not well developed.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 130604 |
| Type of provider | General further education college |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 5,398 |
| Principal/CEO | Kate Webb |
| Telephone number | 01753 793000 |
| Website | www.eastberks.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 or above | |
|---|-----------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships) | 216 | 143 | 1,163 | 521 | 1,834 | 317 | 3 | 79 |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | | |
| | 180 | 174 | 64 | 80 | | | 18 | |
| Number of traineeships | 16–19 | | 19+ | | Total | | | |
| | – | | – | | – | | | |
| Number of learners aged 14 to 16 | – | | | | | | | |
| Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding | 87 | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from: | Skills Funding Agency | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | – | | | | | | | |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality director, 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.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Richard Beynon, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Steven Tucker | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Judy Lye-Forster | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Mark Hillman | Ofsted Inspector |
| Claire Griffin | Ofsted Inspector |
| Gavin Murray | Ofsted Inspector |
| Janet Rodgers | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| David Martin | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Helen Flint | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Penny Mathers | Ofsted Inspector |

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