

East Kent College

General further education college

Inspection dates

24–27 January 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding	Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
		Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Outstanding leadership strategies meet the economic and social needs of students across the region and in local communities, have improved the standing and reputation of the college following the acquisition of Dover and Folkestone campuses, and recognise and meet employers' skills needs.
- The provision for work experience is outstanding and is highly rated by employers and other stakeholders. An exceptionally high number of students take part in purposeful and challenging work experience.
- Almost all students enjoy very good levels of progression with the vast majority progressing successfully to further education, training or employment because of successful completion of their qualifications and excellent support and preparation for their next steps.
- Students benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment and are highly motivated to succeed in well-planned and equipped learning environments that enhance their learning and inspire them.
- Apprentices across all subject areas make outstanding progress in developing good job skills and knowledge.
- Leaders and managers work very closely with local authorities, special schools and other agencies to maintain outstanding provision for students with high needs.
- As a result of exceptionally effective and productive community engagement and partnership working, adult students from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds develop skills, enabling them to progress into sustainable employment or further learning.
- 14- to 16-year-old full-time students gain good levels of confidence and a renewed positive attitude to learning through the effective development of their personal, social and work-related skills.
- In a small minority of lessons, across all provision types, work set is too easy and students do not make the progress they should. In addition, a small minority of students in all provision types are unaware of the progress they are making and unsure of the steps they need to take in order to achieve.
- Despite significant increases in achievement, the proportion of students achieving GCSEs at grades A* to C and levels 1 and 2 functional skills in English and mathematics is too low.

Full report

Information about the provider

- East Kent College is a general further education college that serves the communities of East Kent from three campus sites at Broadstairs, Folkestone and Dover. In 2014, the Dover and Folkestone campuses of K College transferred to East Kent College, which has been operating as this expanded, three-campus college since August 2014.
- The majority of the students at East Kent College are on full-time study programmes but with a significant number on adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. The college also has bespoke provision for around 270 students in receipt of high-needs funding and a small provision for full-time 14- to 16-year-olds. The college works with a very small number of subcontractors. The vast majority of the provision is at entry level, level 1 and 2 with a small provision at level 3.
- East Kent College has the highest level of student deprivation in the South East region with the vast majority of students at the college originating from wards with high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Over half of its 16 to 19 study programme cohort enrol at the college without a GCSE grade A* to C in English or mathematics; as a result, they have significantly lower starting points than students at other, similar providers. Almost half of all students at the college declare a learning difficulty or disability and the number of those in receipt of free school meals is three times that of those at other similar providers.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should continue with their initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to raise standards further, focusing on those areas where achievement rates are not yet high enough. In particular they should ensure that:
 - lecturers set work that is sufficiently challenging to help the most able students make rapid progress and achieve or exceed their expected grades
 - lecturers provide sufficiently detailed feedback so that all students know what progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their work in order to achieve higher grades
 - managers and lecturers support students to be motivated to attend their English and mathematics classes so as to benefit from the good teaching, learning and assessment identified within these sessions and, as a result, improve their skills and achievement of English and mathematics outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- When the college acquired the Dover and Folkestone sites from another provider in 2014, outcomes were well below national rates in most areas, the campuses were poorly maintained and uninviting, staff morale was low and engagement with employers and communities was very limited. Leaders and managers have made outstanding progress in significantly improving outcomes for students at the two 'new' campuses while maintaining standards at the Broadstairs site. At the same time, they have been exceptionally successful in rejuvenating buildings and learning resources, enhancing the reputation of the college and the levels of community engagement at the Dover and Folkestone campuses.
- The principal and senior leaders set themselves exceptionally high standards and expectations and communicate these very well to staff, who understand and share them. Working relationships between senior leaders and staff are extremely positive, and these set the tone for the relationships between students around the college.
- Senior leaders have worked very successfully to develop a strong and pervasive culture of expectation and enablement for students at all the college campuses. Lecturers and middle managers work imaginatively and productively to improve opportunities for students, many of whom come from communities beset with social and economic deprivation.
- Leaders, managers and governors maintain a relentless focus on improving outcomes and opportunities for all students. They have been particularly successful in raising standards in apprenticeships, adult learning and provision for learners with high needs, which are now outstanding. However, across the provision attendance at English and mathematics classes is below the college target, which managers have correctly identified as an area for improvement.
- Strategic planning is exceptionally effective. The principal and senior leaders focus plans on developing students' skills, meeting employers' needs, and raising economic and social well-being in the region. Consultation on major plans, including the forthcoming merger with Canterbury College, is timely and wide-ranging.
- Managers craft the curriculum offer exceptionally well to meet local and regional skills and social needs. Leaders have taken decisive and successful steps to build a strong and positive reputation for the college, so it is now widely seen as a major positive contributor to community well-being across east Kent.
- Employers, local councils, Jobcentre Plus (JCP), chambers of commerce and local enterprise partnerships are all involved in planning the curriculum and strategic positioning, and are highly appreciative of current leadership. Leaders are valued for their flexibility, the rapid action they take in response to requests for bespoke provision, and for the ingenuity of strategies to meet needs of shifting population groups and those with very high needs.
- Since the enlargement of the college, leaders and governors have brought about a carefully managed withdrawal from most subcontracting arrangements, which had not always produced good outcomes for students. Subcontracted provision is now very limited

and is closely managed to ensure quality in teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes.

- Leaders, managers and governors have a clear, accurate understanding of the quality of provision. Leaders make exceptionally good use of the views of students, staff, employers and other stakeholders to shape strategy. The innovative and highly effective 'college performance indicators' (CPIs) dashboard gives leaders and governors a very clear and reliable picture of performance. Senior staff and governors use the CPIs well to gain a view of comparative performance across the year and for the previous three years. When required, improvement action is rapid and generally highly effective.
- Staff benefit from a supportive and wide-ranging development programme; this links well with formalised appraisal and performance management measures to promote staff engagement and improved teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have created a climate in which middle managers are exceptionally well motivated, enjoy high levels of trust and autonomy and, as a result, can manage and develop their teams in ways that best suit the provision and personalities involved.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are enthusiastic, confident and constructive in their engagement with the executive team. Governors challenge senior leaders frequently and freely, and their challenges are very well informed by clear and full information about college performance.
- Individual governors maintain very good links with the college executive team through a termly link arrangement. Governors and senior managers value the opportunities to discuss challenges face-to-face, and the deeper understanding of management roles and provision this process brings.
- Contacts between governors and employers, community representatives and students are frequent and productive. For example, the excellent community advisory boards provide governors with a very effective link to the communities and employers that the college serves.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all students benefit from a secure and safe environment at each site of the enlarged college. Campus improvements, for example in providing a gated but welcoming environment at the Dover site, have given students and staff greater security and safety without removing the college from its community.
- Leaders, managers and staff have a suitably high level of concern for the safety and well-being of their students. Students work safely in practical classes and workshops, and know how to behave in potentially dangerous environments such as construction sites. Staff are very conscientious in assessing safeguarding risks and taking action to prevent them. Senior safeguarding officers and other support staff have strong and effective links with relevant specialist agencies and authorities.
- Leaders promote diversity and a culture of mutual respect around the college. Staff and students are very receptive to the needs of others in the college community and, as a

result, campuses are safe and harmonious places to study and work. The very high numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in receipt of high needs funding are fully and warmly involved in college activities and life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Lecturers use high-quality resources in well-planned and equipped learning environments to enhance learning and inspire students. As a result, students enjoy their learning and are motivated to succeed. Lecturers carefully plan learning to support and develop the diverse needs of students including those aged 14 to 16 years who have disengaged from learning in the past; those living in significantly disadvantaged communities; those leaving care; those facing poverty and hardship; refugees and asylum seekers and those with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The vast majority of lecturers effectively plan learning activities to develop students' work-related skills. Lecturers have high expectations of students; they use questioning skilfully to elicit answers from students and develop deeper thinking about the work they are completing. In practical lessons, students make good progress because lecturers carefully match the work to students' specific needs and abilities. Lively and confident teaching encourages students to experiment with answers they are unsure of and offer explanations to improve and support one another's learning.
- A wide range of pastoral and learning support is accessed by students; as a result students remain in learning and are supported well to succeed. Progression mentors have a central role in 'walking alongside' students who are at risk of falling behind, disengaging with learning, or who are facing personal and social difficulties. Students with dependent care needs can rearrange lessons to help them to remain on their courses, and maintain their care responsibilities.
- Additional learning support is effective in supporting learners with additional learning needs to access mainstream courses. The vast majority of learning support staff skilfully question students and encourage them to come to their own conclusions when completing tasks and group activities in lessons.
- A wide range of staff development activities and support from learning coaches lead to improvements in the confidence of lecturers to plan, implement and assess the quality of their lessons and support the achievements of their students. Staff are well qualified and experienced and maintain good links with industry and local employers to ensure currency and credibility in their subject areas.
- Lecturers use appropriate tools to accurately assess students' starting points and identify literacy and numeracy skills as well as any personal and social barriers to learning. Lecturers keep clear records and are aware of the specific needs of students.
- The vast majority of students make the progress expected of them and demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Students are confident and aware of their next steps in education or work. However, in a small minority of lessons, across all provision types, work set is too easy and students do not make the progress they should. Also, a small minority of students in all provision types are unaware of the progress they are making and unsure of the personal targets that would help them to achieve.

- Lecturers use effective systems to monitor students' progress and accurately identify students at risk of falling behind. A range of supportive interventions helps students to attend, be punctual and participate in lessons. Students benefit from subject-specific support through, for example, 'success groups' provided when lecturers are concerned about students falling behind in their studies.
- Apprentices receive excellent support from their assessors in all subject areas. This includes frequent visits, very good use of assessment methods, frequent contact between visits, and skilful use of the new e-portfolio. Reviews evaluate very effectively the development of apprentices' vocational skills. The vast majority of apprentices receive highly effective feedback at work and from assessors that gives them a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve in their job role and in their coursework.
- Lecturers' expectations of students are high and are reinforced throughout students' courses. Assessment methods are appropriate to the levels of courses and the individual needs of students, for example the use of pictorial prompts and clues for students with high needs.
- In a small minority of lessons, students do not receive helpful feedback in marked work and are unable to identify what they need to do to improve their work.
- Parents, carers and employers are made aware of students' progress and achievements. They receive detailed reports throughout the year and have a central role in helping to plan appropriate learning. Very effective links with schools and social care are crucial in enabling a smooth transition from school to college for high-needs students.
- Equality and diversity themes, British values, the prevention of extremism and radicalisation, and safeguarding are frequently presented as topics for discussion and debate in lessons, for example in programmes which prepare students for employment where equal opportunity recruitment practices are explored fully, often challenging those few students with stereotypical views.
- English, mathematics and skills to prepare students for work are central features of all courses. These are woven through course content well. In the vast majority of GCSE English and mathematics courses, there is precise tracking of students' progress, although achievements are not yet high.
- Work experience is well established across the college; as a result, students gain a good understanding of employment including the attitude and behaviours they need to adopt while at work. Theory links well to practice and students can identify these links and apply them to their own experience in work placements particularly well. Students value the contribution that work experience makes to their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- The provision for work experience is outstanding and is highly rated by employers and other stakeholders. East Kent College has received the highest possible level of satisfaction from employers in Kent and is the preferred training provider of JCP in the locality. An exceptionally high number of students take part in purposeful and challenging work experience. This gives them the chance to practise their vocational skills, gain additional qualifications, adopt professional attitudes in real work settings and develop

their own knowledge of the industry. The supported employment programme for students with high needs provides excellent progression routes into internships in areas of work that match their specific area of interest, for example within the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate. Apprentices improve their work-related skills and in doing so, contribute well to employers' businesses.

- Students from all study programmes participate in an impressive range of social action programmes such as helping to renovate local buildings; fabricate new equipment and build fire trays and rocket launchers to be used by the local training fire department; and repair flat roofs and assist with preventing further flood damage to the building of a local day centre. Working alongside professionals not only helps students to practise their vocational and team-working skills but also to take pride in enhancing the lives of others in the heart of their communities.
- Students develop excellent personal and social skills and behave well across all provision types and age groups. Leaders and lecturers act as highly positive role models for their students, helping them to raise their expectations, self-worth and resilience. Students show respect for each other and for their lecturers and their behaviour is exemplary. Students take much pride in their achievement, show initiative and contribute positively during their lessons. Students work collaboratively and engage very positively with learners with high needs and peers with an asylum-seeking background. Students with high needs develop effective strategies to manage their emotions and behaviour. Students aged 14 to 16 are positive in their view of the college and take pride in gaining the 'employability passport', which motivates them and helps them progress to other courses in the college.
- Exceptional personal support helps students to achieve their learning goals and to keep them engaged and on track. Students benefit from the excellent support provided by their progression mentors who act as their personal tutors, helping with a range of complex personal concerns such as housing; mental health; self-harm; and access to funds, the food bank and furniture. Mentors work closely with their colleagues to make sure that all students receive timely support and are referred to external agencies as and when they need it. GCSE students receive highly effective support through free energy-boosting breakfasts and stress management sessions on the morning of their examinations.
- Careers advisers provide highly effective, impartial advice and guidance on careers and course options to prospective and current students. Students make good use of the job shop and the careers team to build their curricula vitae, improve their interviewing skills during mock interviews, and complete their university application forms. The end-of-programme interview is highly effective in ensuring that students understand their next steps.
- Students see the benefit of the achievement of skills such as English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) to help them in their studies and wider life. The majority of lecturers integrate these skills in their lessons well. Students improve communication and presentation, contribute to discussions with increased confidence and present their work and ideas more clearly and effectively. They apply their mathematics skills well, for example in engineering. Students on employment programmes develop effective counting skills to help them manage their budgets, and improve their ability to carry out their job-seeking tasks online. However, students on the study programme do not always attend their English, mathematics and ICT lessons, and assessors do not

always ensure that apprentices apply their English and mathematics skills in the workplace.

- Managers monitor attendance closely and, as a consequence, attendance has improved over the past two years with the large majority of students attending well and punctually, despite complex and high needs. Attendance to English and mathematics lessons has increased and is now just below the college attendance average. The majority of the students on study programmes who miss their English, mathematics or ICT lessons complete a suitable amount of independent study to catch up with their work.
- The college offers a secure and safe environment, which is highly valued by students and employers. Students and apprentices know how to keep themselves safe because college leaders place a high priority on safety and welfare. As a result, staff support an increasingly high level of disclosures related to physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, mental health and neglect. Risk assessments are systematically carried out before all work experience and extra-curricular activities such as trips and visits.
- Students engage very well with all aspects of British values. They take part in a range of enrichment activities that include charity events, educational visits, sport and external speakers. Students discuss ethical issues with confidence and engage in debates about respecting diversity, the value of democracy and freedom of speech. The high level of enrichment activity supports students very well to successfully extend their awareness of topical issues in their localities, and at national and international levels.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The very large majority of students complete their courses and achieve qualifications that enable them to progress to further education, training or employment. Adults and students on study programmes make at least the progress expected of them and achieve well, in line with similar providers. This is particularly the case for those aged 16 to 19 on study programmes at entry level, level 1 and level 2, and for adult learners.
- Achievement for students on access to higher education programmes is outstanding with almost all successfully progressing to university in subjects such as nursing, law, policing and criminology. In 2016, the first student from the college took up a place at Cambridge University.
- Achievement at levels 1 and 2, where the majority of students study, is good in a range of vocational areas. Achievements for adults on most courses, including GCSE English and science are high, but achievement of GCSE mathematics grades A* to C is lower than for other similar providers. Despite significant increases in achievement, the proportion of adult students achieving English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at level 1 and level 2 are too low for a small minority of students.
- Achievement for students aged 16 to 19 on study programmes, including in GCSE mathematics, are good but GCSE English high-grade achievement remains low. Achievement in basic skills, although improving, is too low.
- Apprentices' achievement within the expected timeframe, at all levels and for all ages, is very high.
- Students in receipt of high needs funding achieve well and often achieve better than their peers on mainstream courses. Outcomes for learners on programmes for learners with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent, with all learners successfully progressing on to higher level courses or supported internships.

- Students within the full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds, who are currently in Year 11, completed GCSE science at the end of Year 10 with good levels of achievement. Almost all of these students have applied to continue into further education or join an apprenticeship programme. As this first group of Year 11 students have not yet completed their courses, there are no full key stage 4 achievements to note.
- Standards of students' work are high and in many cases exceed those expected for the level of course. Students demonstrate a high level of technical skill in a number of vocational areas, producing industry-standard work. Students take immense pride in their work and delight in sharing this with their peers, lecturers and external visitors and clients. For example, students on a media course commissioned to produce several short films did so to a high standard that clearly demonstrated their creativity and understanding of the needs of the client.
- Students are very well supported and prepared for their next steps and the vast majority of students on 16 to 19 study programmes and adult programmes successfully progress onto further education, training or employment. A high number of students on entry level, level 1 and level 2 programmes progress internally to higher level programmes and the large majority of apprentices move into full-time employment or to a higher level apprenticeship. Almost all students in receipt of high needs funding progress into employment or further study and adult students on programmes to prepare them for work achieve very high levels of progression into sustained employment.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The college has 1,690 students on 16 to 19 study programmes across 14 subject areas, with the largest number of students on vocational courses in childcare; health and social care; construction; hair and beauty; and hospitality. Over two thirds of students study at levels 1 and 2.
- Staff manage study programmes effectively; they successfully identify areas for improvement and support staff to make changes that improve students' experiences. Leaders have put in place individualised and innovative programmes that build on the student's prior attainment and prepare them well for future employment, which contributes to high levels of achievement and progression. Students at The Edge at Folkestone work on real life client commissions in the creative industries including social media promotional videos and photography for advertising.
- Students show high levels of respect to one another and to their tutors; behaviour in lessons and around the campus is very good. Students are highly supportive of one another, value each other's contributions and are inspired to take risks and experiment with answers.
- Students benefit from high-quality work experience. Innovative use is made of commercial and community work experience opportunities and skills competitions to extend students' experiences and develop strong skills to prepare them for work. Students also develop good personal, social and work-related skills through a good range

of enrichment activities, particularly through community days.

- Students develop their professional attitudes well; in particular, students on vocational courses are well presented and understand the importance of uniform, appearance and a professional approach.
- Students feel safe on campus and work safely in practical sessions, for example by wearing the correct personal protective equipment. There is effective use of risk assessments in many vocational areas, which promotes students' understanding of the importance of health and safety.
- Lecturers use students' starting points well to establish their individual needs. The vast majority of students make good progress towards their learning goals as a result of work that is well planned to match their needs and good feedback that enables them to know what they need to do to improve. In a small minority of classes, lecturers do not plan so effectively and the activities do not match students' abilities and feedback does not always sufficiently help to secure improvement. As a result, a small minority of students are not sufficiently challenged and do not make the progress expected.
- Students understand the value of improving their mathematics and English skills both in their vocational subject area and for their wider life and future employment. The majority of students enter the college without a grade C or above in English or mathematics so they follow relevant and appropriate courses, develop their skills well and make progress. In a small number of cases, vocational lecturers do not correct students' written English errors sufficiently to support improvement in future pieces of work.
- Attendance is not yet sufficiently high across all courses, with attendance at English and mathematics classes below the college average.

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

- Currently, 867 adults study at the college or at community sites on part-time and full-time vocational programmes; access to higher education courses; GCSEs in science, English, mathematics and ICT; functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); family learning and short programmes to prepare students for work.
- Students from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds develop good vocational, functional and employment skills as a result of exceptionally effective and productive community engagement and partnership working with JCP. Many progress into sustainable employment or further learning, and students on access to higher education courses progress to university. Students, many of whom have been absent from learning for significant periods of time, develop confidence and increased self-esteem.
- Staff maintain highly productive relationships with a number of employers in order to assist delivery of bespoke vocational courses. These support the development of a range of highly valuable employment skills including interview techniques and CV preparation. Students also develop an excellent range of skills such as team working, problem-solving and timekeeping, alongside their vocational competences; as a result, a significant proportion progress into work trials and sustained employment.
- In a large majority of lessons, lecturers plan teaching and learning that engage, inspire and motivate students, and develop their employment functional and interpersonal skills.

Lecturers carefully develop students' employment skills, and deepen their subject understanding, for example in equality and diversity topics in customer service. Students on access to higher education courses benefit from very high quality practical lessons, such as heart dissection for science students, which enable them to apply theory to practice.

- Lecturers and support staff very effectively identify students' starting points and their barriers to learning before the start of courses. They work well with students and external agencies to identify the many significant barriers to learning such as mental health problems, personal and social problems and, where appropriate, to identify and source support.
- Lecturers have very high expectations of their students and use their expert vocational knowledge and skills to develop students' understanding, application of theoretical concepts and development of independent research skills. Lecturers use assessment activities very effectively to identify students' progress and provide insightful feedback. As a result, the majority of students are motivated to learn and are inspired to progress into work or further learning. Students produce work of a very high standard and make good progress.
- Lecturers track students' progress with exceptional care, quickly identifying and addressing barriers to progress, enabling students to develop and achieve their learning goals. As a result, students feel extremely well supported and develop high levels of confidence in their abilities. Students have good confidence in asking their lecturers and peers for help; they work well in groups and provide very good support for each other. Lecturers are adept at using the students' own experiences in lessons to support teaching and learning.
- Students benefit from an extensive range of support that helps them enter the job market. For example, many students who do not have appropriate forms of identification receive help and funding to secure documents such as copies of birth certificates or driving licences. Lone parents value highly being able to access crèche facilities for their children at community venues. These allow many students to engage in learning who may otherwise not be able to do so, and reduce social isolation. Students also benefit from access to food banks based in learning centres.
- Community learning centres serve the needs of local neighbourhoods exceptionally well, for example by offering English, mathematics, and ESOL courses at convenient and accessible locations. Managers use links with schools very effectively to promote learning opportunities. Shift workers and students with childcare responsibilities are able to vary the times of their classes to fit in with their other commitments.

Apprenticeships

Outstanding

- Approximately one fifth of students at the college are on an apprenticeship, with the largest numbers in engineering and manufacturing technologies, retail and commercial enterprise, and business administration.
- Leaders and managers are growing the apprenticeship offer exceptionally well to meet national and local priorities and the needs of employers. Leaders have significantly increased the number of employers with which the college works, and the number of

apprenticeships available has risen sharply, particularly in the 16 to 18 age group. A broad range of subject areas are meeting students' and employers' needs well. For example, the new beauty therapy apprenticeship was introduced recently to meet employers' needs.

- Apprentices receive very effective off-the-job learning and one-to-one coaching that improve their skills and knowledge very well. Tutors plan sessions well, using their vocational knowledge very effectively to make theory sessions interesting, with a good variety of sufficiently challenging activities that engage apprentices well. In practical sessions, tutors and apprentices make very effective use of high-quality resources. Tutors provide effective coaching and set high expectations for the quality of work.
- Apprentices receive excellent on-the-job training and support from employers. Apprentices are closely supervised, undertake a good variety of activities and learn new skills. For example, a painting and decorating apprentice learned how to paint a flat roof to ensure it was waterproof.
- Apprentices receive good feedback at work and from tutors that gives them a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve in their job role and in their coursework. In practical lessons, tutors set high expectations and provide clear feedback on how apprentices can improve their technical skills.
- Apprentices receive good assessor support, with frequent workplace visits used well to assess competence and progress. Assessors question apprentices very effectively to ensure that they have sufficient understanding. They use the new e-portfolio well to help apprentices submit work, and to provide constructive feedback.
- Apprentices across all subject areas make excellent progress in job skills and knowledge. They take on increasing responsibilities and varieties of job tasks. For example, a business administration apprentice gained specific responsibility for all aspects of business promotion using social media. Apprentices enjoy their learning and become much more confident at work.
- The standard of apprentices' work is consistently high. In practical workshops, apprentices produce good quality work, whether making door frames in carpentry, or achieving high standards of painting. Employers value the quality of apprentices' practical work in a variety of job roles. Most apprentices produce a very good standard of work in their portfolios, with good use of photographic evidence, and demonstrate good levels of subject knowledge and understanding.
- Apprentices have a very positive impact on their employers' businesses, using the skills gained at college to enhance employers' practices. A catering apprentice is using their silver service skills to provide improved service in their job role. A hairdressing salon employer is now able to offer beauty therapy to clients because their apprentice progressed onto a beauty therapy apprenticeship.
- Apprentices make excellent progress to permanent employment or further learning. The very large majority of leavers in 2015/16 progressed to sustained employment.
- Apprentices receive very effective information, advice and guidance before starting their programmes. Staff take care to match learners to apprenticeships that meet their career objectives. The pre-apprenticeship selection and recruitment process helps learners prepare for job interviews and employers are very impressed with the calibre of candidates put forward for interviews. End-of-programme interviews are effective in

ensuring that apprentices understand their next steps.

- Apprentices adhere very effectively to strict safe working practices. Employers and tutors ensure that apprentices work safely and wear appropriate personal protective equipment. In one example, a science apprentice whose job role is to extract venom from spiders has a very good awareness of the risks involved and the limits of their responsibility which include not working with dangerous spiders whose venom is lethal.
- Apprentices make good progress in their English and mathematics skills through attendance at off-the-job lessons, and ICT workshops are effective in supporting learners and preparing them for tests.
- The number of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship on time is very high. The vast majority of current apprentices are making at least good progress in their qualifications and are on target to complete on time.
- In a very small minority of cases staff do not use progress reviews to coordinate on- and off-the-job learning sufficiently well; as a result, not all apprentices apply their English, mathematics and ICT learning in the workplace.

Provision for learners with high needs

Outstanding

- Leaders and managers have a very strong focus on meeting the demand for high needs provision in the local area. College leaders work in conjunction with the local authority, and have invested heavily in working with special schools and other agencies to ensure that the needs of students are met when they enrol at the college.
- Leaders have developed highly specialised provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and also responded to demands for specialised provision for students with sensory impairments when local provision for these students was withdrawn.
- The exceptionally varied range of college programmes are clearly focused on progression to employment and to independent living. This provision is offered to students for five days a week.
- Students benefit from extensive opportunities to participate in work-related opportunities, including sheltered work placements within the college, community-based placements and supported internship opportunities. All students benefit from a minimum of 30 hours of placement. Entry and level 1 students participate in community-based projects which are linked well to work skills. For example, students were involved in removing and refurbishing woollen poppies from a local war memorial and cleaning, repairing and replacing them for Armistice Day.
- Staff ensure that the needs of students are met well before and after enrolment. Staff undertake visits to schools, they provide school link courses and taster days and they attend students' annual reviews prior to students leaving school. Where students have more significant learning difficulties and disabilities there are arrangements to meet and design appropriate support programmes with input from a range of health and education agencies. Where students have medical and physical conditions there is good liaison with health care professionals. For the vast majority of students, these arrangements ensure that appropriate support is in place upon enrolment.

- Students understand well the progress they are making and their achievement towards their learning goals. This progress is demonstrated through charts and tables that are easily understood by students and celebrate their achievements towards goals and targets in their education, health and care plans.
- Students enjoy their learning. Lecturers plan the vast majority of lessons well to meet students' needs. Staff have high expectations of students. In a very small minority of sessions, learning support is used ineffectively and learners are not challenged appropriately.
- Lecturers recognise and record students' progress and achievement highly effectively to demonstrate the good progress of students, particularly in the area of independent living and preparation towards employment. Extensive use is made of pictorial evidence, video, photographic and witness statements to record students' achievement.
- Staff put in place outstanding strategies to ensure that students who have disabilities can communicate effectively. These include signs, symbols, sign language, sign language interpreters, communication support workers, learning support staff, adaptive technology and communication aids. A full-time speech and language therapist supports students' development of communication skills.
- Students demonstrate excellent progress both onto other courses and into employment. Staff have developed a large supported internship programme that provides very good opportunities for students to move toward employment. The vast majority of students on this programme achieve positive outcomes towards employment.
- Students benefit from high levels of support that enables them to succeed in their learning. The college support team has a very good range of specialist support skills including for autistic spectrum disorder, behaviour, dyslexia and therapy.

Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds

Good

- The technical school on the Broadstairs campus is in its second full year of operation, with the first cohort of Year 11 students due to complete in 2017. There are 49 full-time 14- to 16-year-old students, 23 in Year 11 and 26 in Year 10.
- Staff provide a curriculum that meets statutory requirements well and provides good opportunities for students to make a wide range of vocational and academic subject choices. The personal and academic help provided for students ensures a smooth transition into learning. Support mentors work closely with schools, social services and other support agencies to ease the transition to the technical school.
- Students benefit from a dedicated learning suite with secure access and good practical workshop facilities. Students are positive about their learning and particularly enjoy their vocational studies and practical learning experiences. Students feel the school is having a positive impact on their lives.
- Managers and teachers have high expectations, and have quickly established a culture focused on respect and valuing individual differences. Students understand well how to behave; they dress appropriately while at college and are eager to learn. The vast majority of students behave well; however, there are a very small number of students for whom the school's behaviour strategies have yet to bring about positive changes in

behaviour.

- Teaching and learning are good across most of the provision; staff plan well to match students' starting points and as a result the large majority of students make good progress. Teachers in a small number of lessons do not always make effective use of learning support assistants to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make progress or further develop personal skills.
- Teachers track and monitor students' progress rigorously. Students are clear about the grades they are aiming to achieve. However, a few students are unclear about their targets in a small number of subject areas. Most students are making good progress towards their grade 4 in GCSE English; progress towards grade 4 in GCSE mathematics for a small minority of students requires improvement.
- Students aged 14 to 16 gain good levels of confidence, with many returning to learning with a renewed positive attitude, after a troubled time at school. The majority of students attend well, enjoy their studies, and make good progress in many subjects relative to their starting points.
- Students develop their personal and social skills and skills to prepare them for employment through the 'employability passport' initiative that provides work placements in Year 10 for all students. Students have clear goals, understand the options available to them and the vast majority plan to move on to further education or training relevant to their career aims.
- Students benefit from curriculum-related enrichment activities, which support their wider development, such as trips and visits. However, the school currently offers only a limited enrichment offer outside of the curriculum. A new multi-purpose sports pitch is under construction for the school, which will significantly expand the extra-curricular enrichment offer.
- In a small number of vocational lessons, lecturers do not routinely use feedback to challenge students to achieve higher grades.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130728
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,853
Principal/CEO	Graham Razey
Telephone number	01843605040
Website	http://eastkent.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+
	421	583	735	638	534	107	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	144	121	89	119	0	19		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	49							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	269							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Free2Learn Aspire Pipeline Kent Mentoring Service (KMS) Romney Resource Centre							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of 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

Judy Lye-Forster, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Hucker	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Stefan Fusenich	Ofsted Inspector
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