

Activate Learning

General further education college

Inspection dates

12–15 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors and senior leaders provide a clear strategic direction, vision and mission.
- Employers' strong involvement with learning programmes helps prepare learners well for work.
- Learners develop particularly good personal, social and employability skills.
- The majority of learners benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers help learners to develop their confidence and make good progress.
- The large majority of learners achieve their qualifications and progress to further education, training or employment because of good support and preparation for their next steps.
- Outstanding work experience opportunities for learners with high needs help many to progress into work from supported internships.
- Excellent partnership working with the local community and the local council influences change and promotes a positive image of what learners with high needs can do.
- Too few apprentices, particularly in construction, plumbing and motor vehicle, complete their programmes by the planned end date.
- The progress the majority of the current apprentices are making is too slow.
- A minority of teachers do not use information about learners' starting points to plan work suited to each learner.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Activate Learning group comprises education divisions spanning further education, higher education, apprenticeships and schools.
- Further education is offered at the three main campuses of Reading College, City of Oxford College and Banbury and Bicester College. Apprenticeship provision is delivered through Activate Apprentices.
- In 2016/17, Activate Learning recruited approximately 9,614 further education and adult education learners and apprentices. The vast majority of students are on full-time study programmes, but with a significant number on adult learning programmes and a smaller number on apprenticeships. Activate Learning also has bespoke provision for learners in receipt of high-needs funding.
- Activate Learning works with 15 subcontractors.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should speed up plans to improve the quality of the apprenticeship provision, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, focusing on those areas where achievement rates are not yet high enough. In particular they should make sure that:
 - managers and assessors identify slow progress or poor performance among apprentices earlier so that more achieve in the planned time
 - assessors set targets with apprentices, during reviews, that help them broaden their technical skills and knowledge
 - assessors improve the quality of their feedback on submitted work to help apprentices develop their skills quicker
 - all teachers use information about the starting points of learners to plan and provide work that is of a level and complexity appropriate to each learner, and develops their mathematical skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, governors and senior leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. These remain good in the large majority of the provision and are outstanding for learners with high needs. However, governors and senior managers have not improved the quality of apprenticeships enough, which still require improvement.
- Senior leaders have improved the effectiveness of performance management with a rigorous process of appraisal and review that monitors effectively the progress teachers make. Managers make judgements on strengths and identify areas for improvement accurately, resulting in clear plans for improvement and high-quality individual and group training and development. Teaching, learning and assessment have improved in some areas identified for improvement, for example health and social care.
- The college is an effective learning organisation. Staff who need support receive effective training from development colleagues. New staff receive good-quality support and mentoring, and senior managers are encouraged to continue to learn. Teachers value their staff development and are good role models for learners. Initiatives such as the monthly 'teach/meet events' and teaching and learning fairs provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice. Tutors have improved their use of technology in the classroom as a result.
- Senior leaders have developed a clear framework for assessing, developing and monitoring learners' skills, including resilience, enterprise, confidence, professionalism and managing emotions. Although managers have introduced this framework recently, it is already having a positive impact. For example, in health, beauty and catering, learners are able to describe the skills they are developing within their vocational areas and are making good progress.
- Employer engagement is strong. Employers are members of faculty advisory boards. They shape the curriculum by providing master classes and business challenges, providing realistic settings and scenarios for learning activities, co-delivering sessions and providing the location for work experience. For example, staff at BMW provide inspirational talks and 200 work placements; Siemens employees have developed a 'making maths work' booklet; Royal Berkshire hospital staff deliver to level 3 health and social care learners at the hospital. Learners are clear about the relevance of their learning to employment and are more motivated as a result.
- Leaders and managers develop the curriculum well in response to the needs of the local community, local businesses and the local enterprise partnerships. Managers have adapted the courses for learners on study programmes in travel and tourism, health and social care and applied science to reflect the local need for skills in the local tourism, care and energy sectors.
- Leaders, managers and governors are ambitious for all learners and promote improvement effectively. Leadership of provision for learners with high needs is outstanding. Senior managers show their support for the importance of this provision by locating the specialist unit in the central area at the Reading campus.

- Self-assessment is largely accurate and reflects the key weaknesses. A range of effective actions have led to improvements in A levels; health and social care; teaching, learning and assessment in English; and the performance of learners with dyslexia. Managers are currently targeting improvements in the technology faculty, and recent reviews show improvements in learners' progress. However, recent changes in the management of apprenticeships have yet to bring about sufficient impact.
- Senior managers have an effective strategy to improve learners' English and mathematics skills. Outcomes have improved in English qualifications, and vocational learners develop better English skills. Managers still need to improve outcomes in GCSE mathematics and level 1 English and mathematics. Learners need to develop their mathematical skills across their courses.
- Senior managers have improved the management of subcontractors, particularly in apprenticeships. Some apprentices have not had a good-quality experience. Managers now supervise poorly performing subcontractors more closely and have ended some contracts. Managers have developed stronger arrangements for subcontracting for the new standards apprenticeships.
- Managers have improved timely outcomes for apprenticeships, but these remain too low, particularly in construction. In too many cases, interventions by managers are too slow to support apprentices who are at risk of not achieving before their planned end date. New management arrangements have led to improved processes and improvements in functional skills outcomes. However, there remains too much slow progress for too many current apprentices.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is strong. Governors have recently changed the arrangements and approaches to their work. They have developed a smaller governing body with appropriate skills and expertise. Their support is strong for the high priority the strategic plan places on links with employers and the development of skills for work.
- Governors agree and set clear and demanding performance targets for senior managers. They are closely involved in the self-assessment process and agree improvement plans. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior staff responsibilities are clear, and staff receive appropriate training.
- Clear and effective reporting mechanisms are in place and managers handle safeguarding cases well. Managers have developed effective relationships with external partners that benefit learners, for example with the multi-agency safeguarding hub and with local 'Prevent' coordinators.
- Managers put in place an appropriate 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan. They have a clear understanding of the 'Prevent' priorities in the region. Learner support staff deal with these priorities effectively with individual learners and through tutorials.
- Managers effectively identify vulnerable learners at enrolment, monitor their progress and

quickly provide support.

- Managers and tutors do not always make sure that all learners have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' agenda and can talk in depth about the dangers of extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of their learners that help learners to develop their confidence and make at least the progress they should. Most teachers plan learning well and use effective techniques that motivate and challenge learners to gain higher-level thinking skills and to produce work of a good standard.
- Teachers use effective ways of preparing learners for work. The art and design team deliver part of the curriculum in multidisciplinary 'maker spaces' with technician support, to mirror community working in businesses. Vulnerable learners benefit from study programmes in a food distribution warehouse. Learners in these areas successfully develop vocational and personal skills, and study English and mathematics. They make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers make good use of high-quality teaching and learning resources to help learners develop good practical skills in areas such as catering, hospitality, hair and beauty, construction and motor vehicle. Teachers use technologies effectively so that learners develop their confidence and abilities in using a wide range of digital applications and resources. Areas such as creative and performing arts and provision for learners with high needs make very good use of digital resources.
- Most learners benefit from interesting lessons that capture their interest. They become confident in the sometimes complex language of the employment area and can use their knowledge well in the workplace. For example, learners in performing arts develop a good understanding of the technical language used in stage production so that they can confidently transfer their understanding from rehearsal to performance. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan work that is well suited to each learner. In a minority of sessions, work is too easy; learners become bored and do not make good progress. Despite management improvements, too few learners on diploma courses achieve the high grades they could.
- During group and workshop activities, teachers make sure that learners stay on track and make good progress by setting individual targets based on progress. Learners, including those with high needs, are encouraged to set their own targets and assess each other, and they develop good independent learning skills.
- Most learners and apprentices receive helpful and detailed feedback during lessons and on their assessments that helps them to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, in a minority of study programme, adult and apprenticeship sessions, teachers' and assessors' questioning of learners and apprentices does not sufficiently check or deepen their understanding. For apprentices, written feedback is not sufficiently helpful to support their further improvement quickly enough.
- Teachers develop learners' English skills well during English GCSE and vocational lessons. For example, in an English GCSE lesson, teachers designed their lesson around a 'Just a Minute' game show activity. As a result, learners extended their vocabulary and increased

their confidence in speaking and listening. Teachers do not develop the mathematics skills of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes as well. They do not give them enough help to link mathematical concepts with practical examples in the workplace. Learners and apprentices who have achieved their GCSE grades A* to C develop additional skills on access to higher education (HE) courses and in most A-level subjects, but less so in other areas.

- Learners who receive the additional support outperform their peers. Teachers quickly identify their needs and put support in place.
- Teachers and assessors work particularly well with employers to design learning and assessment activities, including work experience and work-related learning, that link closely to their expectations. Teachers apply the expectations of the workplace during theory sessions so that learners are able to use their knowledge well during work-related activities and work experience. This helps learners develop the skills and behaviours that allow them to move into their intended careers.
- Most teachers promote diversity well and raise learners' awareness of equality effectively. Learners work well together. They develop respect and positive attitudes and the skills they need to be an active citizen in modern Britain. Apprentices' understanding of diversity is less well developed, and in a small minority of sessions staff do not always explore themes sufficiently well with apprentices.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners develop their personal, social and employability skills particularly well. They self-assess these skills at the start of their course, and tutors give learners good practical advice and guidance on how they may improve during their studies. Leaders and managers have placed great importance on these skills.
- Teachers make good use of subject-specific topics to develop learners' confidence, for example using individual and group work to develop learners' confidence in discussions. As a result, learners and apprentices are self-confident and articulate in meetings and discussions. Learners can describe their progress and achievement clearly and are proud of these achievements.
- Teachers plan and manage work experience well so that learners are actively involved in finding relevant and varied work experience placements. In almost all cases, these placements give learners beneficial insight into work in their chosen field and help them make decisions about their futures. Learners evaluate their work experience carefully and can identify the improved personal and work-related skills it has given them.
- The standard of learners' and apprentices' work is generally high. In some subjects, it is exceptionally high. For example, learners in a foundation level food preparation class produced mince pies and chocolate shortbread biscuits to good retail standards.
- The large majority of learners develop their skills in English, including good spelling and grammar, during their lessons, but do not sufficiently develop their mathematical skills.
- Learners benefit from good careers advice and guidance from specialist staff at the college and their tutors, which is well planned and focused. The advice enables learners to make good progression to higher education or employment. Learners attend

informative fairs and events intended to widen their horizons.

- Learners and teachers pay good attention to health and safety in practical classes and workshops. Learners can identify what makes them safe. They know how to keep themselves safe online, know how to report concerns and are confident that staff will deal with their concerns effectively.
- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour is good. They adopt the respectful and tolerant behaviours expected for life in modern Britain. They contribute confidently and knowledgeably to discussion about ethical issues, and teachers make good use of topical subjects such as the impact of Brexit and the refugee crisis to encourage debate and engagement. In an English lesson, learners were writing letters expressing their personal concerns for a current refugee situation. In drama, learners produced a short play to highlight differences, challenge attitudes and encourage others to vote and make a difference.
- Most learners and apprentices have a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and the threat of extremism and of the importance of resilience in protecting themselves from potential threats. A small minority of learners are less familiar with these topics.
- Levels of attendance and punctuality for a minority of learners are too low. Poor attendance in subjects or at sites often mirrors lower attainment of qualifications on programmes.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The large majority of adult and 16- to 19-year-old learners who complete their courses achieve qualifications that allow them to progress to further education, training or employment. In the three years to 2017/18, the proportion of these learners achieving their qualifications has risen.
- Learners on classroom-based provision make at least the progress expected of them and the majority achieve well, in line with similar providers. This is particularly the case for those on certificate programmes at entry level, level 1 and level 2. However, the proportion of learners achieving on diploma programmes at all levels is below that of other similar providers, because too few learners remain on their programme to the end. Where learners leave early, this is often because they enter employment.
- The very large majority of learners in receipt of high-needs funding achieve well and often do better than their peers, significantly so in information and communication technology (ICT), performing arts and business. Outcomes for these learners are excellent, with almost all of them successfully progressing to further education, higher education, supported internships or employment. A significant number of those undertaking a supported internship progress into sustained paid employment.
- In 2016/17, a higher proportion of learners achieved grades A* to C in GCSE English than comparable grades in the previous year. Achievement for learners aged 16 to 19 and adult learners remains above that of learners at similar providers.
- The proportion of learners who achieved their GCSE mathematics at grades A* to C was too low and remains below the achievement levels of similar providers. The large majority of learners achieve basic skills in English and mathematics at entry level. However, the

proportion of learners achieving basic skills in English and mathematics at level 1 is too low.

- Staff enrol all learners who have previously gained a GCSE in English and/or mathematics at grade 3 or below on a GCSE programme. Those learners from the lower starting points make particularly good progress working toward GCSE English, with over half improving their grade.
- The achievement of learners on access to HE programmes is good, with almost all successfully progressing to university in subjects such as adult nursing, furniture design, air transport with commercial pilot training, biochemistry and animation.
- Too few apprentices achieve within the expected time. The achievement of the majority of apprentices on intermediate programmes is in line with those at similar providers, but is slightly below for those on advanced programmes. The progress the majority of the current apprentices are making is too slow.
- Tutors support their learners very well and prepare them for their next steps. The vast majority of learners aged 16 to 19 and adult learners successfully progress to further education, training, employment or higher education. An increasing number gain places at prestigious universities. A high number of learners on entry level, level 1 and level 2 programmes progress internally to higher-level programmes, and the large majority of apprentices who complete and achieve their qualification move into full-time employment or onto a higher-level apprenticeship.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The college currently has almost 5,000 learners on 16 to 19 study programmes across 14 subject areas, with the largest number of learners on vocational courses in creative arts, health and social care, construction and sport. Around half of the learners study at levels 1 and 2.
- Managers design and manage study programmes well, including the development of English and mathematics skills and work experience. Senior leaders make sure that learners get impartial careers advice and guidance. Learners progress well to further education, higher education, employment and training.
- Learners enjoy learning and work diligently and conscientiously. As a result, their confidence grows, which supports many to think about what they have learned and what they need to do to improve. For example, level 1 automotive learners assess their knowledge of coolant systems before commencing work on the topic. Level 3 hairdressing learners reflect on areas where they need to develop their skills, and this influences the choice of task they complete next to close the skills gap.
- The majority of teachers devise a wide range of interesting and appropriately difficult tasks to capture the interest of learners and keep them interested in learning. As a result, the majority of learners make good progress in their learning and achieve their qualification. However, a minority of teachers do not use information on the skills that learners already have to adapt tasks to meet their needs, which slows their progress.
- Learners benefit from particularly effective use of group work. They greatly appreciate the

opportunity to discuss their ideas and learn from each other. However, a small minority of learners do not write down what the teachers and other learners say during group work and so they have no permanent record of key learning points.

- Teachers plan tasks that link well to the world of work. Learners can see the relevance and practical applications of their new skills and knowledge in employment. In A-level psychology, learners could explain how leading questions may alter a person's recall of a situation and affect a police investigation. Teachers work closely with employers, who help shape the curriculum and assess progress. For example, in ICT, managers from IBM help set and assess learners' work.
- Learners use technology exceptionally well. For example, performing arts learners made a video recording of their performance to help their reflection and identify areas for improvement. Learners in business used their mobile phones to complete a short research task. In health and social care, video cameras record learners' practice in a simulated ward environment so that teachers and learners can see what they have done well and what they need to improve.
- Teachers frequently and carefully check learners' understanding and application of what they have learned, using a variety of appropriate methods such as questions and observations. However, on a small minority of occasions, teachers are too quick to answer questions for the learners and do not extend and challenge learning.
- Learners' work is at least of the standard expected for their level of study. The majority of teachers carefully mark learners' work, celebrating what they do well and outlining clearly what they need to improve. For example, in A-level sociology, learners received excellent feedback, with useful prompts to help them in further analysis of the issue under consideration. However, on a small number of occasions, the feedback given is too brief and limits learners' ability to progress.
- The majority of learners complete meaningful work experience that prepares them well for future employment. They receive effective support throughout the process, which helps them prepare for placement, identify what they want to achieve, and evaluate the impact of the placement on their learning. The proportion of learners participating in external work experience in creative arts is not yet to the same high level as elsewhere in the college.
- Nearly all learners take part in the wide range of work-related learning and enrichment activities that develop their work and personal skills. These activities often involve employers who provide support. For example an international manufacturing organisation, Kärcher, sponsors a challenge to develop learners' entrepreneurial skills. The manufacturer provides groups of learners with start-up funding and motivational support and then challenges them to raise as much money as possible for a nominated local charity.
- A high proportion of learners progress from their study programme into work or further study. Staff support learners well to get jobs, through individual careers advice and curriculum vitae (CV) and interview workshops. Learners who want to go to university receive prompt, useful support in writing their personal statements and submitting their applications. As a result, an increasing proportion of learners progressed to university last year.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The college has 2,251 adult learners on programmes including pre-employability courses, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and access to HE courses. The college's adult provision consists of education and training for adults wishing to improve skills or gain qualifications to progress to further and higher education, and employability courses.
- Leaders and managers are ambitious for the success of adult learners and have been quick to put in place a wide range of programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of learners and employers in the community, for example pre-employability programmes such as digital literacy and health and safety, courses in ESOL, resettlement programmes and access to HE programmes.
- Leaders have been successful in helping learners overcome barriers to learning, such as with a resettlement project linked to ESOL provision funded by the local authority that has led to Syrian refugee families becoming part of the local and college communities. Additionally, managers support learners to go to job interviews by helping them to buy appropriate interview clothes, or support them by paying their professional recognition fees, achieved on completion of accredited programmes, for example in security.
- The large majority of teachers plan and tailor learning to suit the needs of individual learners. Most teachers accurately monitor the progress learners make. On access to HE and pre-employability programmes, they make sure that learners are fully involved in assessing their own progress and identifying their next steps for learning. As a result, the large majority of learners are clear about their progress and know what they need to do to improve.
- In the large majority of lessons, teachers plan well-designed tasks that are suitable for each learner. As a result, learners are interested in their subject and develop the personal, social and work skills necessary for them to progress. In a small minority of lessons, poor planning and weak checking of learning and understanding result in learners making more limited progress.
- Learners develop skills and present work that is at least of the standard expected for their level of study and sometimes better. Learners on pre-employability programmes successfully gain the skills and behaviours that increase their chance of getting and keeping a job. On ESOL and community programmes, learners successfully gain the skills and confidence to become part of their local community.
- Most learners make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills at entry level. These achievements allow them to achieve their learning and progression goals. For example, in community education, learners develop their English speaking, listening, writing and reading skills to speed their resettlement and involvement in the local community.
- Learners benefit from good information, advice and guidance before starting their courses. They receive support from employers and the college careers team as part of the information sessions before their courses. This has allowed learners to make more informed decisions about their route and choice of career.
- Attendance is good, and the majority of learners receive effective support to catch up where personal circumstances stop them attending as planned.

- The proportion of learners progressing to employment or further study is very high. Progression to higher education from access courses is also very high. Learners on ESOL programmes make good progress, and the large majority gain employment or progress to further study.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- During 2017/18, the college has so far enrolled 1,430 funded apprentices, with 829 studying at intermediate level and 601 at advanced level. The college offers 10 apprenticeship standards; all other apprenticeships are frameworks. The largest numbers of apprentices are in engineering and construction industries. The college has 267 apprentices studying with subcontractors.
- Too many apprentices, particularly in construction, plumbing and motor vehicle, do not complete their programmes by the planned end date. Leaders and managers have made changes to improve the monitoring of apprentices' progress, but these have yet to impact and improve achievement rates for all apprentices.
- Target-setting for apprentices requires improvement. Assessors do not focus clearly on the development of new skills and knowledge. Consequently, apprentices do not know enough about their progress or what they need to do to improve their technical skills.
- Assessors' feedback to apprentices is not sufficiently effective in supporting them to improve the standard of their work. Tutors and assessors provide oral feedback on apprentices' work, but they do not routinely reinforce this with detailed written feedback. Consequently, apprentices do not always know how to produce better work or how to improve the standard of their written English.
- In a minority of apprentice reviews, assessors' treatment of health and safety, and equality and diversity is superficial. Assessors do not always explore these themes in sufficient depth to develop apprentices' broader understanding of their relevance across all aspects of their lives.
- Managers' positive drive to improve learners' basic skills in English and mathematics has resulted in apprentices developing these skills earlier within the programmes. More apprentices now achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. Apprentices with higher-level English and mathematics skills do not always receive sufficient support to improve their knowledge and skills further.
- The large majority of apprentices are gaining confidence and skills and can demonstrate practical skills and techniques that they use well in the workplace to make a positive contribution. For example, furniture apprentices learn veneering skills and take on commissioned work for their employer.
- The majority of tutors use industry knowledge and expertise well to plan off-the-job training sessions. Consequently, most apprentices develop good technical skills. The majority of teachers use learning resources effectively to develop apprentices' vocational knowledge and understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, teaching resources are not up to date. For example, in motor vehicle, tutors use videos that are 10 years old to demonstrate manufacturing processes.
- Assessors establish good working relationships with employers, which supports the development of apprentices' vocational skills well. Most apprentices benefit from

supportive employers who identify areas for development for their apprentices. For example, employers attend furniture apprentices' block release workshops and discuss practical homework tasks and the apprentices' skills gaps.

- A minority of employers are not fully involved in the planning of framework programmes, in choosing relevant qualification units or in apprentices' progress reviews. They are, therefore, not always aware of their apprentices' progress towards their qualifications. Most apprentices benefit from supportive employers.
- Managers establish effective and productive relationships with large and small employers across the region. They work on the development and delivery of new standards that meet employer-specific needs and upskill local residents, such as in motor vehicle manufacture and construction.

Provision for learners with high needs

Outstanding

- The college has 310 learners in receipt of high-needs funding, the vast majority based at the Reading campus. Of these, 133 learners are on specialist high-needs courses, 116 are in supported foundation programmes, 26 are on mainstream programmes and 35 are on supported internships. The college receives funding from 13 local authorities to support learners' education, health and care plans (EHCPs).
- Leaders and managers work in partnership with a range of local organisations and the local council to plan and manage highly effective personalised programmes. These meet local needs and prepare learners for progression into higher-level programmes, work or for greater independence.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of learners and respond swiftly to need. Managers support staff well to make sure that learners' transition into college is a very positive experience. Teachers support learners very well to develop their confidence and their social, personal and life skills through well-planned activities, for example by running the highly valued post room at the Reading campus since 2016.
- Learners benefit from outstanding sensory support. As a result, they develop the resilience and confidence to work independently and manage their own support very effectively. Learners make very good progress and, with staff, use the virtual classroom very well. The sensory support team work highly effectively with feeder schools to meet the needs of new learners and support those moving into work, further programmes or higher education.
- Learners develop their confidence very well. They work on a range of projects with other departments of the college and external organisations. For example, they run the daily service in the local library. They plan and deliver high-quality exhibitions promoting their skills and achievements. In cross-college projects, learners have displayed their work with other departments and the high quality of work has surprised and challenged other learners' perception of the ability of learners with high needs.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality are good. Almost all learners achieve their outcomes linked to their challenging EHCP targets. Learners benefit from very good information, advice and guidance from an external provider alongside well-planned work-skills sessions by teachers. Reviews are highly effective.
- Learners benefit from highly effective additional learning support on vocational courses

and in supported programmes. Learners benefit from a strong focus on peer support and as a result they are more confident to speak out and are sensitive to the needs of others. Learners develop strategies to manage their own behaviour effectively.

- Almost all learners benefit from outstanding work experience placements, and the college has a very strong supported internship programme. Former interns have sustained their positions for several years, some progressing onto apprenticeships and others acting as role models, mentors and ambassadors to promote the project.
- Practical enterprise projects develop learners' understanding of the world of work exceptionally well, and the quality of goods produced and sold by learners is very good. Learners develop confidence and improve their communication skills and mathematics skills. They work in teams, understand profit and loss, work to deadlines and experience customer service and sales. Staff support learners very well to look out into the wider world, and learners have started a food bank project to support other learners across the college who are experiencing financial difficulties.
- Leaders, managers and teaching staff make very good use of the virtual classroom and virtual communities. Learners set up safe and secure interest communities to publicise projects, share work and improve their English and IT skills.
- In a very small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to provide stimulating and stretching activities. Teachers do not check learners' understanding well enough, and learners lose interest. Learners use a wide range of media and specialist programmes, including the virtual classroom, but in a small number of lessons resources do not always reflect the needs of young adults.

Provider details

Unique reference number	134153
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	9,614
Principal/CEO	Sally Dicketts
Telephone number	01865 550550
Website	www.activatelearning.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+
	1134	965	1337	872	2464	770	6	28
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	296	447	109	370	1	10		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	302							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Ignite Sport UK Ltd, British Academy of Jewellery (Free2Learn), JLD, Oxford Energy Academy, 3 AAA, The Sheffield College, Trafford College, BMET College, Gloucestershire College, Abingdon & Witney College, Prospect College (Pro Cat - Basildon), Kingston College, UTC Reading, SOFEA and VLUK							

Information about this inspection

The deputy CEO and executive director, as nominee, assisted the inspection team. 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; the report reflects these views. 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
Martin Ward	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penelope Horner	Ofsted Inspector
Roland White	Ofsted Inspector
Tricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector
Nicki Adams	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Cannon	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Griffin	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Deane	Her Majesty's Inspector

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