

# Bracknell and Wokingham College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

23–26 January 2018

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	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have created a secure and welcoming learning environment in which students and apprentices feel safe and enjoy their learning.
- Managers have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices and increased the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications.
- Students and apprentices produce written and practical work of a high standard.
- Students and apprentices maintain high standards of behaviour at the main college site, in community venues and at work.
- Students for whom the college receives high needs funding make very good progress towards their qualifications and/or their personal development targets. They are integrated well into college life.
- A large proportion of students and apprentices studying creative arts, health and social care, public services and electrical installation achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of their students and apprentices, which results in some, especially the most able, not making the progress they should.
- The college's financial position is weak.
- Too few students achieve qualifications in English.
- Students, especially those on level 3 courses, do not develop their vocabulary, spelling, grammar and analytical and evaluation skills well enough.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Bracknell and Wokingham College is a small general further education college located in the centre of Bracknell. Community learning courses are offered in a range of venues in the local area. The college recruits its students from several local council areas, predominantly Bracknell Forest and Wokingham. The college offers courses at all further education levels for students aged 16 to 18, for adult students and for apprentices in most subject areas. The college also offers training for students in receipt of high needs funding.
- The rate of unemployment in the local area is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieve five grades A\* to C and/or 9 to 4 in their GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at the end of key stage 4 is around the national rate.

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

- Support teachers to teach lessons that enable students and apprentices, particularly the most able, to fulfil their potential and achieve high grades.
- Ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of what their students and apprentices can achieve.
- Improve students' English skills by training teachers, especially those teaching GCSE and functional skills, to teach lessons that help students to master the skills in which they are not yet proficient.
- Challenge students to broaden their vocabulary, improve their spelling and grammar and develop their analytical and evaluation skills, particularly in vocational lessons.
- Secure a stable financial situation for the college.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- College leaders have sustained the good quality of provision seen at the previous inspection. They ensure that students and apprentices receive good teaching and training, and achieve good results. All those who study or work at the college are rightly proud of the prevailing culture. This is characterised by a friendly, welcoming and very well-kept learning environment.
- The principal is an effective ambassador for the college. Highly visible in the college and in the wider community, he has helped to raise the status of the college. However, neither he nor governors have prevented a serious decline in the college's financial position. A fall in the number of full-time students in recent years has made the position worse. Class sizes are too small on many courses. At the time of the inspection, governors had agreed, in principle, to merge with a larger provider. However, the detailed work to effect this partnership had only just begun.
- Most students and apprentices take well-designed courses that match their ambitions. They receive good advice and careers guidance. Study programmes offer younger students a broad choice of pathways. However, opportunities to take part in social, sporting and cultural activities are limited.
- Leaders and managers know the college well. Their evaluation of the quality of education uses comprehensive data and is broadly accurate. For example, leaders identify a need to raise all teaching to the highest quality and to improve results in GCSE English as key priorities. Action plans designed to achieve these aims are sensible and monitored well. However, not enough attention is paid to improving further the quality of individual teachers' classroom practice. The quality of teaching in both English and mathematics GCSE classes is not yet good enough.
- Arrangements to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improve are sound. Teachers would benefit from more training on the craft of teaching if the college ambition of moving 'from good to great' is to be achieved. Poor teaching performance is rare, but is dealt with effectively.
- College staff make every effort to work with local employers and respond to local employment priorities. They also attempt to respond to priorities in the wider area covered by the local enterprise partnership. Their work in this regard is partially successful. Leaders and managers work successfully with many smaller employers but are less successful in their efforts with the many global corporations based in the area. These corporations are looking for employees with high-level skills and usually choose to do their own training. Leaders have adapted the college curriculum to meet local priorities in some areas, for example electrical installation. The rationale for other parts of the curriculum is less well considered. Younger students do not benefit fully from the regeneration that has created numerous jobs in Bracknell town centre, especially in retail and catering. Apprenticeship provision is expanding and is increasingly targeted at meeting skills priorities.
- Middle managers work hard to support teachers and students. Their work makes a significant contribution to raising standards in several areas, for example in apprenticeships, and in provision for students with high needs. In other areas, managers

are less successful in identifying and implementing improvements. For example, those responsible for improving study programmes struggle to bring about higher standards.

- All staff ensure that students and apprentices benefit from equality of opportunity. Students with high needs are particularly well integrated into the college. The culture of the college encourages tolerance of others and respect for the diversity of attitudes and beliefs held by students. There are no significant achievement gaps between groups of students.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Governors take a great deal of pride in the college and are tireless advocates for the benefits of further education. They have good links with curriculum areas and many visit lessons and talk to staff and students frequently.
- Current governors have a realistic understanding of the college's precarious financial position. They have set aside their own views to pursue a merger in the long-term interest of students and apprentices.
- Despite the current poor state of college finances, governors continue to ensure that they hold senior leaders to account for the quality of education and students' and apprentices' outcomes. Governors' deliberations at meetings are thorough and they ask senior leaders the right questions.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The college has a very good track record of ensuring that students and apprentices are safe in all respects. The volume and severity of safeguarding incidents, for example bullying, are very low. Those responsible for students' and apprentices' safety carry out all appropriate checks on staff, and risk assessments, diligently. Staff are trained well to recognise and report potential risks. Vulnerable students receive very good tailored support.
- Students show a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Most understand the potential risks posed by those promoting extremist views, including through social media. Although apprentices are introduced to these topics at induction, they struggle to see the relevance of them to their workplace.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Most teachers make good use of varied and challenging activities in lessons that help their students and apprentices learn. This results in most of them making at least expected progress. Teachers frequently check students' and apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Most students and apprentices are confident about the progress they have made. They know what they need to do to improve because teachers and assessors provide them with useful feedback.
- Most students and apprentices produce work of a high standard, both in practical and

theory lessons. Adults on community learning courses demonstrate rapid improvements in their work from the start of their course, and students on vocational courses develop relevant practical skills and knowledge. This is often as a result of teachers using topical examples successfully to motivate students and support their progress. Apprentices are able to link theory successfully to their workplace activities. The skills and behaviours apprentices develop are valued by their employers.

- Teachers and assessors give students, including those with education, health and care (EHC) plans, and apprentices, very effective careers advice to help them achieve their intended next steps. Adult students move on to higher levels of learning and to courses where they achieve qualifications. Students aged 16 to 18, and apprentices, are confident about what they need to improve to achieve their qualifications and get into their chosen careers. Those who want to go to university receive good support from tutors for their applications.
- Students and apprentices who need extra help with their work receive effective support from teachers and support staff outside lessons. However, support for students in lessons is less effective because teachers do not manage support staff effectively to help students develop skills. Similarly, teachers do not give volunteers in lessons for adult students clear direction about who needs help and what type of help they need. Students with EHC plans get very effective support in lessons, which helps them to integrate well into their course.
- Teachers help students develop their mathematics skills well in vocational lessons. Students can apply mathematical concepts to their vocational work in order to complete tasks accurately. Mathematics teachers do not make sufficient use of information about students' and apprentices' abilities, assessed at the start of their course, to plan and teach lessons that help them develop their skills.
- Students and apprentices do not sufficiently improve their vocabulary, spelling, grammar and analytical and evaluation skills. This is particularly the case for those students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. Teachers do not place enough emphasis on improving students' written English skills in vocational and academic lessons. As a result, the majority of students are not making sufficient progress with GCSE and functional skills qualifications. Students and apprentices use technical and vocational terms confidently and accurately orally, but their written work is not as good.
- Teachers and assessors do not teach lessons that the most able students find challenging enough. In a minority of lessons, teaching is dull and uninspiring and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their students and apprentices can achieve. Consequently, not enough students make better-than-expected progress and achieve high grades, for example in level 3 business courses and in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not use technology well to enhance their teaching. Consequently, too few students and apprentices learn outside the classroom or complete homework tasks beyond the requirements of their course assignments and assessments. In a few cases, the paper resources that teachers use are of poor visual quality, out of date or inaccurate.
- Managers use frequent observations to identify accurately strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment. However, they have yet to provide sufficient relevant and effective training to help teachers improve further.
- Teachers do not always record students' progress clearly. Although leaders have

introduced an online system for recording and reporting on students' progress, teachers are not yet all using the system. Several keep progress records in other formats. As a result, managers do not yet have a complete view of students' progress. Managers and assessors monitor apprentices' progress accurately and intervene swiftly when they fall behind their expected rate of progress. As a result, most apprentices' progress is good.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Students and apprentices are proud, justifiably so in most cases, of the work they do at college. Their teachers' approach to learning and support helps them develop into self-assured and confident students. For example, students on hairdressing courses rapidly develop good customer-care skills. They also understand the importance of good oral and written communication skills in gaining their clients' confidence. Adults studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and health and social care develop confidence in dealing with patients, their families and fellow workers.
- Students aged 16 to 18 on vocational courses enjoy well-considered work-related learning and external work experience placements. They appreciate these opportunities and, in most cases, they enhance their learning. They develop a greater understanding of workplace skills and how their learning at college influences their chances of gaining a job. Teachers relate theory to practice very well and draw on the students' work experience to explain ideas.
- Young people with EHC plans benefit from work experience that is well matched to their needs. For example, students who are proficient with information technology have completed placements at a kitchen-design company, where they used computer-aided design software to a high standard.
- Students' and apprentices' behaviour is good. They speak positively about respect and tolerance and they exemplify these both in the way they work together in classes and in the ways they use the social spaces in the college. Staff have created a welcoming and inclusive environment. Staff, students and apprentices look after the college well and keep it litter-free.
- Students are punctual to lessons and most are well prepared to learn. Students pay good attention to safe working practices while they are in the workshops and salons. They use relevant resources and equipment confidently and rapidly develop good skills for work. Students on entry-level courses benefit from very good activities that prepare them for independent living. For example, they improved their teamworking by working together to design a college campaign for greener living.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe at college and in their daily lives. They know who to go to if they are concerned or worried about their safety or well-being. Students speak knowledgeably about internet safety, bullying, looking out for their friends and being safe when they are out and about. However, adult students and apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They do not apply the information they receive at induction to the workplace or, in a minority of cases, see its relevance.
- Students use the wide range of extra help available to them at college very well. These services include counselling, sexual-health advice and information to address drug and

alcohol abuse and stopping smoking. Students particularly value the curriculum vitae (CV) writing activities and lessons on managing their own budgets. The personal finance lessons are relevant to their lives, promote good debate and help students to understand the consequence of debt and its impact on their lives.

- The vast majority of students and apprentices receive good independent advice and guidance about their future career plans. As a result, they move on to positive destinations, including higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Staff support students with EHC plans well to prepare for their next steps in learning, employment or independence.
- Staff have taken positive action to increase the proportion of students applying to higher education. They work with local universities to provide good advice for writing personal statements. For the few students who do not wish to move on to further or higher education, careers advice is less effective. These students are less certain about their career path. Although they are concerned about their futures, they do not receive the help and support they need.
- While college data shows students' attendance is high, during the week of inspection, attendance was low, especially at lessons for GCSE and functional skills in English.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Students aged 16 to 18 on study programmes make at least the progress that would be expected of them, and a high proportion achieve their qualifications at levels 1 and 3. Students at level 2 are less successful. Students on courses in creative arts, public services and health and social care are particularly successful, as are those studying A-level mathematics.
- The majority of current students and apprentices are making at least expected progress and, where they are not, staff intervene to help them improve. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification in the planned time has improved over the past three years and most now achieve on time. Apprentices in electrical installation are particularly successful in achieving their qualifications.
- A high proportion of students for whom the college receives high needs funding and who follow full-time study programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 achieve their qualifications and move on to further learning at a higher level or to employment. Students on courses for personal progression and qualifications at entry level make very good progress with their personal learning goals, achieve their qualifications at a high rate and move towards independence.
- A very high proportion of adult students on courses that do not lead to qualifications achieve their course objectives and personal learning goals. They move on to further learning or employment or make improvements to their well-being as a result. Most adult students on courses that lead to qualifications achieve these and, on courses such as accountancy and marketing, gain further responsibility or promotions at work.
- Most intermediate- and advanced-level apprentices gain permanent employment, additional responsibilities or promotions on completion of their qualification. A high proportion of intermediate apprentices move on to an advanced-level qualification.
- Most students aged 16 to 18 move on to positive destinations on completion of their

course. These include the next level of learning, including higher education, employment or apprenticeships. The majority of students at level 3 aspire to move on to degree courses, but the proportion who apply and are offered places is too low.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Nine hundred and fourteen students are on study programmes at the college. The majority are on vocational courses at levels 2 and 3. Sixty-nine students are studying A-level subjects and 65 are on full-time GCSE courses. The remainder study at level 1 and entry level. The college receives funding for 93 students who have high needs, most of whom are aged 16 to 19. About two thirds of these are on full-time study programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 and the remainder are on entry-level courses.
- Students find the majority of their lessons challenging and they benefit from teachers making frequent references to up-to-date industry practice and standards. This enables students to understand the relevance of their learning, develop high standards of work and become proficient in relevant practical skills. In the most successful A-level lessons, students apply their theoretical knowledge to a broad range of contemporary matters and debates. For example, A-level business studies students improved their understanding of competing strategic positioning models by applying these to a variety of businesses, including major international companies. A-level biology students enjoyed a very fast-paced and stimulating lesson on genetic engineering that they applied sensitively and maturely to a range of societal examples.
- In better lessons, teachers check students' learning frequently and effectively to ensure that they are making progress. They test this further through activities in which students have to apply their knowledge and evaluate their understanding. For example, A-level law students developed their understanding of legal concepts through a very effective scenario based on a street robbery and an incident in the emergency department of a local hospital where the victims were taken.
- In the very best examples, students question each other. They reflect on their learning and share their conclusions with the group. A-level mathematics students improved their knowledge of parametric equations by completing a 'hasty homework' exercise. This consisted of a one-page piece of 'homework' that they had to mark, with the instructions that all the final answers were incorrect. They had to work out how and why the answer was wrong.
- Students apply their mathematics skills in a broad range of vocational lessons. For example, travel and tourism students calculated complex costings of a holiday, converting currencies and working through flight durations which included stopovers and time differences, with accuracy and confidence. They could demonstrate how their skills had developed over recent weeks.
- Teachers and support staff assist students with EHC plans on study programmes very well. These students are integrated fully into the life of the college and their lessons. Staff develop their skills and talents with sensitive support and good use of college support services.
- Teachers prepare students well for their future roles in the workplace through high-quality



careers advice and guidance. For example, level 2 health and social care students speak with confidence about how they would adapt their approach when dealing with a wide range of clients from different backgrounds, including older people. Most students have the opportunity to complete a relevant and meaningful work experience placement, during which they develop their practical skills further and develop skills for work, such as timekeeping, personal presentation and communication.

- Teachers are not yet sufficiently skilled at teaching lessons that allow all students to fulfil their potential. In too many cases, students all complete the same activity, which results in the least able finding the work too difficult and the most able finding the work too easy. In a small minority of lessons, teachers have low expectations of their students and all of them find the work too easy. In lessons for GCSE and functional skills in English and mathematics, teachers do not help students develop new skills, despite having comprehensive information about students' prior knowledge.
- Teachers, especially those teaching students at level 3, do not pay enough attention in lessons to students' spelling, wider English or academic skills. For example, students use technical terms correctly orally, but are unable to spell them correctly in written work. Students' skills in comprehension, analysis and evaluation are not of a high standard because teachers do not encourage them to read widely enough and apply these skills in their work. As a result, students are not practising the skills they need to be successful at the next level of education, especially those who are intending to go to university.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- The college has 420 adult students on a wide range of courses that lead to qualifications. About 760 are on community learning courses for English, mathematics, well-being and leisure. Around 100 are on courses that lead to professional qualifications, and the remainder are studying English, mathematics, access to higher education or languages.
- Leaders and managers have devised a relevant curriculum which meets the needs of the communities around the college. Highly effective partnership working with local councils and community groups helps identify and provide courses for adult students to improve their English and mathematics, improve their health and well-being and gain skills and knowledge that will help them get a job.
- The vast majority of students on community learning courses that do not lead to qualifications achieve their personal learning goals and/or course objectives. Students on English courses develop their literacy and communication skills well, and students on photography courses produce high-quality work, with photographs showing improvements in composition, lighting and exposure during their time at the college. Students on ESOL courses use their new language skills at work, in their personal lives or in their communities, improving their independence. For example, students in an ESOL group who work in care homes described how they are now more confident in dealing with patients, their families and fellow workers.
- The proportion of students on courses that lead to qualifications who achieve well has improved over the past three years and most are now successful. Students in accounting, personnel development and marketing work at a variety of levels to improve their prospects of securing work or gaining promotion. Students on access to higher education courses gain good subject knowledge and they develop very good academic research and

writing skills that prepare them well for higher education or employment. Teachers monitor students' progress well on the large majority of courses. They give students good advice on what they need to improve to move on to training at higher levels.

- Managers' initiatives to develop courses for the local authority are helping unemployed adults develop teamworking, problem-solving and resilience skills. As a result, they are developing skills to help get jobs or gain more fulfilling work.
- During lessons, teachers provide particularly effective oral feedback to students about the quality of their work. This helps students to correct mistakes and improve their skills. This also helps to motivate students to make progress during lessons, and work harder to achieve their ambitions and learning goals.
- Resources to support learning are good. Accommodation at community venues is of a good standard and teachers establish positive learning environments. Teachers use electronic whiteboards, mini whiteboards and good-quality handouts well to help students learn and to check their understanding. Teachers make good use of the virtual learning environment (VLE), which contains practice exercises and good-quality published materials. They use the VLE effectively to help students on basic skills and language courses improve. Students on entry-level English and/or mathematics courses benefit from the support of volunteers in lessons.
- Students receive very effective careers guidance from teachers, particularly those aiming to get full-time jobs. For example, trainee counsellors are given good advice on professional qualifications, practice hours and supervision. Students on basic skills or ESOL courses are guided on the types of work available in the region, helped to write a good CV and helped with interview techniques.
- Teachers in a small minority of English and mathematics lessons do not identify accurately the skills students need to develop, especially the most able students. They have this information available to them, but do not use it to plan learning, so students find some of the work too easy and do not make the progress they should.

## Apprenticeships

**Good**

- The college has 434 apprentices, with about two thirds following advanced-level qualifications and a small minority following higher-level programmes. There are 91 apprentices enrolled on the new electrical apprenticeship standards qualification. Two thirds of apprentices are on framework-based courses. The majority of apprentices are on programmes in electrical installation, health and social care, motor-vehicle engineering, business administration and accounting.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the requirements of apprenticeships are met for standards-based apprenticeships and apprenticeship frameworks. Managers and assessors have worked effectively with curriculum teams to successfully introduce new standards-based apprenticeships. These include courses in accounting, hairdressing and electrical installation. Employers value the strong relationships they have with college staff and appreciate the support they receive to prepare for the start of the apprenticeship levy and the new standards.
- Managers and assessors monitor apprentices' progress well and intervene swiftly when their progress falls below the expected rate. As a result, the proportion of apprentices

completing their programme successfully has increased over the past three years and most now complete within the planned timescale.

- A high proportion of those apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English or mathematics achieve these at their first attempt. They become confident in applying mathematics skills at work and using vocationally relevant terms correctly and frequently.
- Tutors and assessors use their substantial experience, expert vocational knowledge and workplace skills effectively to train apprentices. Most on- and off-the-job training helps apprentices develop new skills and make progress towards achieving their qualification. Staff have a good understanding of the new standards and they develop good-quality personalised learning plans with apprentices. As a result, apprentices develop skills that reflect industry standards and they are prepared well for their next step in employment.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning and are motivated to progress and carry out increasingly complex and challenging tasks. For example, in health and social care, apprentices identify meaningful activities that can be used with clients who have dementia. In business administration, apprentices develop complex spreadsheets that enable their employers to monitor completion targets for staff training.
- Apprentices develop good work-related, personal and social skills. They also develop the behaviours expected in the workplace. They improve their self-confidence, are reliable and integrate into busy workplaces very quickly. They contribute rapidly to the efficiency of their employer's business. Apprentices are hard-working and diligent and are valued highly and respected in the workplace. Accounting apprentices develop skills in the management of late payments to improve cash flow. In healthcare, apprentices develop care and compassion and work well as part of a team. Electrical installation apprentices develop good fault-diagnosis skills and communication skills, which they use effectively with colleagues and customers.
- Assessors meet frequently with apprentices and their employers to agree targets for further learning. Employers contribute well to reviews, helping to set targets for development or improvement. In a minority of cases, targets do not help apprentices develop their wider skills and behaviours beyond the requirements of the qualification. In a minority of cases, assessors do not link on- and off-the-job training to targets for improvement or further learning.
- Apprentices find the work in a minority of off-the-job training sessions repetitive and mundane and they lose interest quickly. This slows their learning. In a few sessions, teaching and learning resources are of poor quality and do not always promote current examples of good practice or the most recent legislation.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130603
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5120
Principal/CEO	Campbell Christie CBE
Telephone number	01344 460 200
Website	www.bracknell.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)	234	244	299	214	381	45	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	64	63	103	163	3	38		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	n/a							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	93							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

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Richard Pemble, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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