

West Kent and Ashford College

General further education college

Inspection dates

2–5 October 2018

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
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	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and level 3 diploma courses leave their course early and do not achieve their qualifications.
- Too few apprentices make the progress expected of them or achieve their qualifications within their planned timescale.
- The proportion of students aged 16 to 18 who achieve grades 9 to 4 in GCSE mathematics is too low.
- Assessors do not help apprentices develop plans for their learning that consider what they already know or can do.
- Too few assessors plan apprentices' on- and off-the-job training in consultation with employers.
- Apprentices and a minority of students, for example those in sport, information technology and English for speakers of other languages, do not receive feedback that helps them to improve their work.

The provider has the following strengths

- Governors, leaders and managers have changed the culture of the college, which has enabled them to improve teaching, learning and assessment through collaboration, training and teamwork.
- Teaching, learning and assessment and personal development, behaviour and welfare, and the effectiveness of leadership and management are now good.
- Governors, leaders and managers have re-established positive relationships with external stakeholders, which helps students prepare for their next steps in education or employment.
- Most current adult students, students aged 16 to 18, and students with high needs are making good progress in extending their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Most adult students, students with high needs and younger students who achieve their qualifications move on to further education, training or employment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- West Kent and Ashford College is a medium-sized general further education college with sites in Tonbridge and Ashford in Kent. Students attend from a wide geographical area across Kent and north Sussex. The college currently has around 3,100 students enrolled at the college and approximately one third of these attend the Ashford campus. The college provides a range of post-16 education and training, including 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and courses for students with high needs.
- Ashford has higher levels of social and economic deprivation and a larger transient community than surrounding areas. The proportion of residents of Tonbridge and Malling with qualifications at level 2 and above is higher than the regional and national rate, but lower for residents in the Ashford area. Employment in areas served by the college is above the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should increase the proportion of students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and level 3 diploma courses and of adult students on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses who stay to the end of their course and achieve their qualifications by ensuring that:
 - teachers use the starting point of each student to make sure that the student's programme is at the correct level for their prior attainment
 - teachers give students feedback on their work, so that they know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Managers and teachers should ensure that a greater proportion of students develop their mathematical skills more rapidly, so that they are confident to apply them to their learning and so that more students can achieve GCSE mathematics grades 9 to 4.
- Leaders and managers need to increase the proportion of apprentices who achieve their programme within the planned timeframe by ensuring that:
 - teachers and assessors take note of the starting point of each apprentice and make sure that their programme is suitably individualised to meet their requirements
 - assessors plan apprentices' on- and off-the-job training in consultation with their employers to make sure that apprentices' skills meets employers' requirements
 - teachers and assessors give all apprentices feedback, so that they know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further
 - assessors check apprentices' progress against agreed targets and, in consultation with the apprentice and employer, set further targets for improvement, so that apprentices and employers are aware of the apprentices' progress towards their planned completion date
 - effective impartial careers advice and guidance is in place for all apprentices to ensure they are well informed of their potential progression choices.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors, senior leaders and their staff have worked assiduously since the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment from a very low base. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good. As a result, an increasing proportion of adult students, students in receipt of high needs funding and students on study programmes who stay to the end of their course achieve their qualifications. However, in too many cases, study programme students and apprentices leave their course early and do not achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers responsible for the curriculum have evaluated the courses they offer in respect of local skills needs and historical performance. They have removed several unsustainable courses from their offer or reduced the size of a few underperforming courses until they can secure good-quality provision in that subject.
- Since taking over the management of the college, leaders have worked very effectively to re-establish links with the local and regional business community. Employers who work with the college now value their links with the college's staff and support them with student work experience placements, by training apprentices and by offering advice and guidance on curriculum developments.
- Leaders and managers have worked very effectively to improve the reputation of the college with the local communities around both main sites. As a result, an increasing number of students are now studying at the college after several years of declining numbers. They have worked closely with both local councils, the county council and the local enterprise partnership (LEP) to make sure that the courses on offer align with local priorities. For example, the Ashford campus now offers a wider range of qualifications in English for migrants and refugees recently arrived in the area.
- Because of their improving standing in their local and regional communities, senior leaders have been able to gain support in improving the standard of buildings and resources for teaching and learning. The LEP and the local and county councils have invested in recent building projects, such as the provision of a new campus for the Ashford site. Improved accommodation and resources have helped in raising staff and student aspirations.
- Leaders, managers and teachers have high expectations of, and aspirations for, their students and apprentices. They have established a culture of high-quality teaching and learning, respect and tolerance that teachers support fully. This culture manifests itself in the way students and apprentices now approach their studies and work hard to achieve their career goals.
- Managers have used staff performance management procedures well to help teachers and managers improve their teaching practice. Where staff have not been able to improve the quality of their teaching, managers have used capability procedures effectively.
- Managers responsible for the small amount of subcontracted provision oversee this part of the curriculum well. Almost all students learning with subcontractors achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers are realistic in their assessments of the quality of teaching,

learning and assessment and students' outcomes. They have set up rigorous quality assurance procedures, which they use well to hold department and subject managers to account in termly monitoring meetings. They set realistic and relevant targets and actions for improvement.

- Managers' assessments of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, made during observations of lessons and training sessions, are accurate and insightful. They use the judgements they make to implement plans for improvement for teachers and trainers. They share good practice widely, such as at the recent teaching and learning fair, where small groups of teachers shared the results of experiments they had conducted to improve teaching.
- Despite their effective work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the proportion of study programme students and apprentices who achieve their qualifications has not improved to a high enough level. Managers recognise this, and they have set relevant targets and actions to achieve this. Current students and most apprentices are making good or better progress.

The governance of the provider

- Governors, who include local employers, know the strengths and the areas for improvement in the college well. They use their varied skills and experience effectively to support the college leaders to make improvements. However, they recognise that the pace of improvement has not been as rapid as they intended for apprenticeships and business, sport and information technology study programme students. They understand the reasons for this and are working hard to speed up the rate of improvement.
- Governors receive frequent and clear reports from managers on students' progress and achievements. They interrogate these thoroughly. They ask challenging questions of leaders and staff when the intended improvements are not clear and request further evidence or information when they are not satisfied. They use their committee structure well to make sure that different areas of the college's operation receive enough scrutiny.
- Governors understand their duties for safeguarding well. They receive annual training for their role and receive a comprehensive annual report on safeguarding from senior leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff responsible for safeguarding are tenacious in their investigation of safeguarding concerns and they give excellent support to students in need. Staff refer students for advice, guidance and support where they identify concerns. Students are confident in the support and guidance they receive from safeguarding staff and, as a result, they refer themselves on many occasions.
- Staff receive frequent training in safeguarding matters to make sure they are up to date with the current challenges students face in their daily lives.
- Staff responsible for safeguarding have set up excellent links with local agencies and voluntary organisations that they use to ensure that students get the help they need. These include support for drug addiction, for mental health and for those in danger of

forced marriage or trafficking.

- Managers are thorough in their recruitment processes to ensure that new staff are suitable to work with young people. They meet their statutory responsibilities. They complete background checks on new staff to ensure they have the right to work in the UK.
- Staff are diligent in their safeguarding duties for students aged 14 to 16 who attend the college.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and managers have taken successful action to improve their practice. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Most teachers quickly discover what skills their students have at the start of their course. They use this information to meet the learning and development needs of students and help them to achieve their potential.
- Most students produce work of a high standard because teachers have high expectations of them. For example, the high standards of work achieved during study programme work placements have led to students securing apprenticeships. Employers comment that apprentices carry out work to a higher standard than some of their qualified staff.
- Most students make good progress in improving their knowledge, understanding and skills; they learn new skills and perfect existing ones. For example, level 2 professional cookery students learn to identify and cook game birds and to choose and prepare accompanying sauces to a high standard. Level 3 art and design students master their photographic skills and learn new skills, such as lino cutting, through their project work.
- Teachers on study, adult and high needs programmes check students' progress often. They put appropriate actions in place to secure improvement for students who are not making expected progress.
- Students and apprentices benefit from high-quality classrooms, workshops and resources. Teachers use these effectively to lead activities and tasks that extend students' knowledge and skills. For example, level 2 music technology students take on the roles of floor and desk engineers in a state-of-the-art recording studio and learn to make high-quality recordings of live performances.
- Teachers and assessors are well qualified and use their industrial experience and expertise well. As a result, students and apprentices develop skills relevant to the industry they wish to enter. For example, level 3 dance students learn the importance of smiling and exuding presence when auditioning for work, as well as the need to demonstrate excellent technique and performance skills.
- Teachers work successfully with learning support practitioners (LSPs). LSPs provide teachers with very detailed and specific strategies to support students in class, so that they can fully access all aspects of the lesson. Students, including those who have special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, benefit from an inclusive social environment in which others treat them with dignity and respect. Where appropriate, students receive effective individual or small-group support outside of lessons for their additional learning needs, and this helps them to achieve their qualifications.
- The large majority of apprentices and students improve their English and mathematics

skills well on their programmes. They learn to use technical language correctly and fluently. For example, level 2 business and accounting students can confidently explain and use the terms 'ratio decidendi' and 'obiter dictum'. However, too few apprentices who achieve the English and mathematics qualification required of their framework have the opportunity to gain qualifications at the next level, even if they are capable of doing so.

- In apprenticeships, the feedback on assessed work for too many apprentices lacks detail. As a result, apprentices do not understand how to improve their skills further. On a few study programme courses, such as sport and information technology, students do not make enough improvement from feedback. As a consequence, too few of these students successfully complete their course and achieve their qualification.
- A minority of students do not make enough progress. Staff do not make sure that their pace of learning and the range of activities they undertake are appropriately matched to their abilities and needs. A minority of teachers do not always check students' understanding well enough or help them to master their learning before moving on to the next task or topic. Teachers on GCSE mathematics courses for study and adult programmes do not identify and deal with the skills gaps of students rapidly enough.
- A minority of apprentices have not received enough visits from their assessors to monitor and review their targets. This has slowed their progress. Many apprentices are unaware of their overall progress or what they need to do to achieve the apprenticeship. As a result, they do not take responsibility for their own progress and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The vast majority of students and apprentices develop good personal and social skills, and effective independent study, research, organisational and analytical skills. Staff act as positive role models and, as a result, students and apprentices are highly motivated and well behaved. Students adhere well to the college's code of conduct and develop positive attitudes and personal resilience.
- Students' attendance has improved significantly. Attendance of most adult students and those with high needs is very high and is good for students on study programmes. Attendance on English and mathematics programmes has improved significantly following effective actions taken by managers. Early indications show high in-year attendance on these programmes. Too few adult students on ESOL courses attend often enough to pass their course.
- Most students benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance which is accessible and inclusive. As a result, students make informed choices about their next steps into higher education, apprenticeships or further education and training. However, apprentices do not have enough access to help them to decide possible career choices and, as a result, they are not always clear what options are available to them.
- The majority of students and apprentices take relevant additional qualifications to further their skills, knowledge of their industry and competencies in their subject areas. For example, level 3 travel students receive training at the global aviation centre for an international airline; beauty therapy level 2 students develop their portfolio through external massage and cosmetic dermatology training; and catering level 2 and 3 students obtain their Craft Guild of Chefs' membership, which helps improve their chances of

getting a job.

- Most students benefit from a wide range of work-related activities and good opportunities to work with employers. Students develop effective work-related skills, attend well, make good use of their time, are punctual and work collaboratively in teams, and many learn to take the initiative and work independently. They gain valuable insight and knowledge of the industry in which they are placed. For example, students benefit from experience in nurseries, beauty salons and outlets, museums, the local international race circuit, website design companies, restaurants and hotels, and catering and food suppliers. Students with high needs do work experience in the college café and departments, and many complete their external work experience in community organisations and charities.
- Most students improve their English and mathematics skills well and can apply these skills to activities in vocational and workplace settings. They become more confident in communicating with others and in presenting their work and ideas to peers and staff. Students on motorcycle maintenance and repair courses measure fuel emissions accurately to ensure that motorcycles work effectively and safely; hairdressing students improve their ability to work out angles and ratios for mixing hair product safely. Students with high needs on the autism spectrum learn to listen to peers in lessons and increase their ability to interact effectively during teamwork.
- Students and apprentices know how to keep themselves safe and know who to speak with should they have a concern about their safety. They apply the college's and employers' health and safety procedures and understand how to protect themselves in lone working situations. They understand how to keep safe when using digital communication technologies. Apprentices wear the correct protective clothing at college and in the workplace.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and know what to do if they see radicalised behaviour. Students on other programmes are aware of the risks of radicalisation with regards to terrorism but too few students are sufficiently aware of broader hate crime and struggle to identify the risks of extremism in their local or regional context.
- Students' understanding of British values is good, and they are aware of their rights and responsibilities. They behave very well, respect each other and enjoy working alongside peers who have different viewpoints, identities and backgrounds. Students take part in a variety of challenging debates, for example relating to female genital mutilation, and the relationship between sexual identity and religious beliefs.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Too few students aged 16 to 18 stay to the end of their course and, as a result, too few achieve. Even though an increasing number of students who do stay now pass their qualification, this proportion is not yet high enough.
- Too few students aged 16 to 18 on diploma courses achieve at levels 1 and 3. In curriculum areas other than sport and media, an increasing proportion of students are now achieving their qualifications at level 2. However, this proportion is not yet high enough.
- Too many apprentices make slow progress and the proportion who achieve their

programme within their planned time is too low. The overall proportion of apprentices who complete their programme has increased from a very low starting point in the previous year, but this proportion also remains too low.

- Male apprentices over the age of 19 perform at a level well below their female peers; this is in part attributed to the very low achievement rates in subjects where apprentices are predominantly male, for example engineering and construction. The performance of male apprentices aged 16 to 18 has improved and is now more in line with their female peers.
- The proportion of adult students who achieve their qualifications has improved over the past three years and is high, particularly for students on Access to HE and A-level programmes. A small minority of adult students on courses such as ESOL make slow progress and do not achieve their learning aims.
- The proportion of adult students and those aged 16 to 18 who achieve grades 9 to 4 in GCSE English has increased and is now high. In GCSE mathematics, the proportion of adult students who achieve grades 9 to 4 has improved but not enough students aged 16 to 18 achieve these grades.
- The proportion of adult and younger students on A-level programmes who pass their qualifications is improving and an increasing number achieve high grades, particularly in subjects such as English literature, law, sociology and mathematics.
- Current second-year students and those who have moved on to the next level of course at the college are making more rapid progress than the previous year and early indications are that the large majority of all students are now making at least the progress expected of them. Most students can identify the skills and knowledge they have developed and are now able to apply their learning effectively.
- Students on vocational programmes and apprentices develop good practical and technical skills to industry standards. These prepare them well for employment or further training. Students on academic programmes develop relevant academic and research skills and are prepared well for study at university.
- Most students on study programmes and adult learning programmes move on to relevant further education, training or employment. The proportion of students who progress to a higher level of study at the college is high for students on entry-level and level 1 programmes but needs improvement for those on courses at level 2.
- Students in receipt of high-needs funding make good progress and develop skills to enhance their employability and independence in their everyday lives. Most achieve their qualifications and move on to further training or into employment.
- Leaders and managers are unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the training all apprentices receive as they do not know what happens to a quarter of the apprentices once they finish their programmes.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Almost 2,200 students are on study programmes, approximately two fifths are at level 3, two fifths at level 2 and the rest at level 1. They study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects, the largest of which are creative arts, science and technology.
- Most students work on tasks and activities that help them to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and apply their new skills and learning in a wider context. For example, law students develop new skills of analysis and evaluation; in psychology, students use technical terminology when considering directional and non-directional hypotheses; and, in information technologies, they use industry standard methods to code and decode.
- Teachers set assessments that are well focused on students' areas for development. This helps students to practise and demonstrate their skills, techniques and competencies. Most students act on the feedback they receive from teachers to make their work better. A minority of teachers do not set targets which are sufficiently clear. As a result, too many students are not challenged to exceed the expectations of their planned courses or supported to improve underperformance, especially in IT and sport.
- Managers and teachers have improved their monitoring of students' progress. They act quickly to halt any decline. As a result, most students are now making good progress in their qualifications, improving technical competencies, gaining new knowledge and increasing their confidence.
- Students in GCSE English are making good progress by developing their skills of creative writing, expanding their vocabulary and improving their descriptive skills. In GCSE mathematics, a significant minority of students do not always know which areas of mathematics they need to improve on and do not make rapid enough progress.
- Students have high aspirations and the standard of most of their work is high. They take pride in their work and are keen to improve. Students are clear about their next steps and, in most cases, they are supported well to achieve their goals. For example, in performing arts, students research drama schools and consider what makes them stand out in auditions. In science, they know what they must achieve to progress to biomedical science and veterinary nursing careers. In areas such as business, the work they do in preparation for curriculum vitae and letter writing does not support their progression. The annual careers fair gives students the opportunity to explore different pathways for progression, but too few attend this event.
- Planned work experience in vocational learning areas links well to students' programmes of study. Most complete their placements. In most curriculum areas, students reflect on their work experience to enhance their learning, but this is not the case in all curriculum areas, for example in business and IT. A-level students do work-related activity or work experience to support their progression.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- There are around 650 adult students enrolled at the college on a wide range of academic,

vocational and access to higher education courses. Most students study full time at level 2 or 3. The college also offers many short, part-time and evening courses to meet work-related training needs. Courses focus on developing the knowledge and skills students need to start work, advance in their employment, or progress to higher education. Some students study additional GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics.

- Managers and teachers have good links with voluntary and community agencies. They work with local authorities to engage disadvantaged groups, including refugees, to develop essential social and communication skills. ESOL courses offer initial study opportunities for many students with little or no prior education but not all teachers ensure that students extend their language learning or reach their potential.
- Students on vocational courses develop high standards of practical skills. For example, electrical installation students use specialist equipment to collect data about a range of materials and make complex calculations to determine variations in levels of electrical resistance at different temperatures; counselling students are skilful in formulating actions to manage conflict and ambiguity in the workplace and domestic situations.
- Most students develop good English skills and the number of students who achieve GCSE English at grades 9 to 4 is high. Students on access to higher education and A-level courses produce high standards of written work.
- The majority of students develop their mathematical skills well, and most effectively when they can link numerical concepts and principles to vocational scenarios. Engineering students make rapid progress in understanding equations, transposing symbols, numbers and values in progressively complex combinations once they understand the need to be able to do so in the workplace. Plumbing students can use long division and multiplication in simple formulae to calculate the variations in watts, volts and amps of domestic electrical circuits. However, not enough students achieve GCSE mathematics, which they must do to study at the next level.
- Most students receive helpful and constructive feedback from teachers, which helps them to improve their work. Teachers mark and correct students' written work carefully. Teachers monitor the progress students are making effectively and record this accurately so that students know how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve their work and achieve their qualifications.
- Most students benefit from well-resourced classrooms and workshops. Teachers use a range of imaginative teaching and learning methods to stimulate students to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Most students make rapid progress and work at a pace suited to their ability and prior experiences. In a minority of vocational lessons, teachers do not use activities that are sufficiently challenging to ensure all adult students make the progress they should.
- Students receive comprehensive guidance on how to progress to higher education or employment. Teachers and careers advisers make good use of their networks and partner universities to tell students about opportunities at university and how to apply. Most students who apply to university begin the course of their choice. Links with employers and suppliers help prepare other students for employment.
- Students learn about diversity and change in society. They improve their understanding of equality, gender and employment. As a result, students can challenge stereotypical and inappropriate comments confidently. For example, in one lesson, humanities and social

science students discussed communities over time, referencing political, technological and legal developments that brought changes for modern families.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- A total of 233 apprentices follow framework programmes in five subject sector areas. The largest numbers are in electrical installation, business administration, engineering, dental nursing and hairdressing. Staff introduced standards-based apprenticeships for the first time this year in electrical installation and leadership and management.
- Managers and staff pay insufficient notice to what apprentices know and can already do when they start their programme. As a result, many apprentices make slow progress and do not achieve their goals, because their programme is either too easy or too demanding. For example, many apprentices must complete their programme in the same timescale, regardless of what knowledge and qualifications they have at the beginning. Too few apprentices complete their programme or have failed to complete within the planned timescale.
- Managers and assessors do not link the apprentices' on- and off-the-job training sufficiently and, as a result, apprentices miss the opportunity to embed their learning at the workplace. Too few employers are aware of the content of the off-the-job training and are unable to develop this in the workplace.
- Too few apprentices understand what they need to do to improve their skills further because the feedback they receive on their assessed work lacks detail. Too few tutors correct spelling and grammatical errors in apprentices' written work.
- Most assessors support apprentices well in the workplace with monthly visits that develop the apprentices' understanding and measure their progress to date. However, assessors in electrical installation, professional cookery, hairdressing and motor vehicle do not visit their apprentices often enough. This has slowed these apprentices' progress.
- Most tutors support the development of apprentices' skills and knowledge. They use effective questioning techniques that draw on industry experience to enhance understanding. For example, in an electrical installation session, apprentices had to create their own 'earthing' diagrams in teams. They then had to present it, while the other teams challenged and questioned them to explain its merits.
- The majority of apprentices with additional learning needs receive additional support that is effective and provided promptly. Apprentices who are identified as needing this support at the beginning of their programme are assigned an LSP at once. The apprentices are then able to send their assignments to the LSP for checking before submission. Work-based assessors undertake extra visits to support these apprentices with their assignments.
- Many of the apprentices take additional qualifications and training to enhance their employability skills relevant to their sector. For example, hospitality apprentices receive master classes from celebrity chef Rosemary Shrager, and engineering apprentices attend an additional welding unit.
- Too few apprentices have access to impartial careers advice and guidance. They are unaware of the options open to them once they complete their programmes. For example, motor vehicle apprentices were unaware of the option to progress to levels 4

and 5.

- Apprentices have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and British values, which staff tell them about at induction and raise again during the apprenticeship course. Apprentices know what to do if they see radicalised behaviour. For example, staff send a themed 'toolbox conversation' to plumbing apprentices every Friday morning for them to debate at work. Too many employers are unaware of the 'Prevent' duty.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- There are 131 students with high needs; just under half are over 19 years of age. They follow vocational and academic study programmes within the college. Forty-two students follow specifically designed entry level courses. The great majority are funded by Kent county council and seven other outer London local education authorities fund the rest.
- Managers have high aspirations for students. They work collaboratively with local authorities and other agencies, parents and carers so that students can access a wide range of disability support and make informed personal choices in planning their pathways to adulthood.
- Managers use funding well to design individual programmes which take good account of students' strengths and long-term goals. As a result, students develop high levels of independence and work skills. Entry level students develop their social skills, knowledge and community awareness through interesting and varied activities in art, music, drama and sports alongside their classroom-based learning, preparing them well for work and independent living.
- Most teachers make very effective use of the detailed assessment information and suggested support strategies to meet students' individual needs well in lessons. They work collaboratively with LSPs to enhance the learning experience for all students. Knowledgeable and skilled LSPs enable students to take part fully in lessons, and wider work and college activities. For example, in a level 1 business class, all students were set individual 'super challenges' in creating spreadsheets reflecting their individual interests. Staff facilitated the process well as they questioned and prompted all to achieve their best possible work. A small minority of vocational teaching staff do not allow students enough time to process information and respond or gain feedback through their mistakes.
- Students with autism spectrum disorders and those with sight or hearing impairments improve their abilities to interact and communicate in a wider range of settings. They benefit from carefully planned and coordinated group and individual support from speech and language therapists, specialist teachers and communicators.
- Students develop good English and mathematical skills. Attractive visual displays in classrooms and social areas reinforce key learning points well. For example, entry level students during their hair and beauty work experience measured temperatures of water and various salon equipment as part of health and safety and numeracy work.
- Students benefit from frequent, clear feedback on their academic progress and on essential personal and social skills development. They gain confidence in practising new skills and dealing with situations they find difficult. Staff make good use of an online tracking system to record their progress carefully. LSPs set challenging targets based on students' individual barriers to learning as they strengthen and improve skills, or as areas

for further improvement emerge.

- Students have very well-planned advice and guidance and tasters of college life. These identify their essential support needs before enrolment, so that they feel safe and ready to learn, with support in place from the outset. College open days and continuing advice about further opportunities help students to take responsibility for planning and making decisions about their futures throughout their programmes. They enjoy their college experiences and attend well.
- Students on entry level courses benefit from a carefully researched supported learning project in the teaching of 'Prevent' duty. This provides bespoke resources and simple clear messages to support students, particularly those on the autism spectrum, to understand the key messages more effectively.
- Most students make good progress because of the well-planned, holistic support they receive. Entry level students improve their communication, timekeeping, teamwork and choice of appropriate clothing through the year-long programme of work experience. For example, students undertake apple picking at a local orchard and take part in community engagement programmes, such as the Clean Britain campaign in a local country park. Students on vocational courses benefit from individual coaching and mentoring, time management and study skill improvements, as well as stress management for those with high anxiety conditions. Teachers do not use assistive technologies, including smart phones, routinely to enhance learning or encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130727
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,080
Principal/CEO	Mr Paul Hannan
Telephone number	01732 853276
Website	www.westkent.ac.uk and www.ashford.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)	468	104	802	248	857	276	0	8
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	68	31	57	70	0	7		
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	131							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	GoTrain							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice 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 students 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
Richard Pemble	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Hillman	Ofsted Inspector
John Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Addison	Ofsted Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Sherwin	Ofsted Inspector

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Employer View

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