

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College

16 to 19 academy

Inspection dates

22–24 January 2019

Overall effectiveness

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Teachers do not plan and deliver lessons that challenge students and meet individual needs. Checks on learning are not thorough, and, as a result, students do not achieve their full potential.
- Leaders and managers have not dealt with the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The new senior leadership team has introduced a range of well-considered initiatives to improve the provision, but it is too early to measure the impact of these.
- Too few students complete meaningful work experience or work-related activities linked to their studies.
- A-level students are not making the progress that they are capable of.
- Attendance has not improved since the previous inspection and remains low.
- Teachers do not use target-setting effectively during reviews to ensure that all students make rapid progress and achieve high grades.

The provider has the following strengths

- Governors and recently appointed senior managers have a clear vision for the future and have high expectations. They are well supported by the Lighthouse Learning Trust.
- Since September 2018, leaders and managers have introduced a well-considered approach to staff development and performance management. They have improved the support and training for new middle managers to develop their management skills.
- Students on vocational level 3 courses make very good progress from their starting points.
- Students benefit from a wide range of welfare services, including counselling and mental health support. This helps students to achieve who would otherwise have left the college.
- Feedback to students on written work helps them improve.
- The newly restructured senior management team has created an inclusive and welcoming college. Because of this, students feel safe, enjoy their learning and are well behaved.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Richard Taunton College is a small sixth-form college in the north west of Southampton and is part of the recently created Lighthouse Learning Trust. The college provides a wide range of academic and vocational courses from level 1 to level 3. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and enrolled onto full-time study programmes, with the vast majority studying at level 3.
- The proportion of students in Southampton achieving five or more 4 to 9 grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is below the national rates. The population of Southampton includes large areas of deprivation. Unemployment in the Southampton area is higher than the regional and national averages.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers should take swift action to make sure students' attendance improves across all subjects.
- Managers should ensure that more students on study programmes develop work-related skills by completing meaningful work experience or work-related activities.
- Leaders and managers should take swift action to make sure all students make the progress of which they are capable and achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers should improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan and deliver interesting and challenging lessons to meet the needs and abilities of all students
 - ensuring that students achieve their potential by setting them ambitious targets, closely monitoring their progress and intervening where progress is slow
 - ensuring that teachers check learning more frequently and effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not made the improvements required following the previous inspection sufficiently quickly. Since the previous inspection, the college has continued to face considerable challenges. A change in status to an academy in partnership with another regional sixth-form college through the Lighthouse Learning Trust (the Trust) has brought financial benefits and allowed the sharing of expertise.
- Standards have not been improved across the college since the previous inspection. The focus on implementing a new local governing board and new senior leadership team, recent re-structuring and the recruitment of many new teachers created distraction for leaders. The new leadership team is making further well-considered changes and has a clear focus on improving teaching, learning, assessment and achievement. Leaders have begun to roll out a range of initiatives with the full support of their staff and board, but still have much to do.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and outcomes for students, particularly for those on A levels, are not high enough. Not enough students attend regularly or complete work experience linked to their study programmes. These weaknesses were both identified at the previous inspection.
- Current leaders and managers are clear about the importance of improving students' English and mathematics skills. There is a clear strategy to help students without grade 4 or equivalent to gain a level 2 qualification. Too few students pass GCSE English or mathematics with high enough grades.
- New leaders have developed a clear vision for the college as part of the Trust which provides them with effective support. Leaders have maintained effective collaborative relationships with other local education providers. They use these well to develop a curriculum which offers useful choices to students. Leaders and staff have maintained the college's custom of supporting students from disadvantaged areas and those with lower achievement, while continuing to provide for students with higher prior attainment. Senior leaders ensure that students without high grades at GCSE can study an appropriate pathway to enter higher education through a combination of A levels and BTEC courses.
- Leaders, managers and staff have created a highly supportive and nurturing culture where students and staff feel valued. Students are supported effectively with useful advice and guidance prior to starting at the college to make sure that they enrol on the correct courses for their career aspirations.
- The recently restructured senior leadership team has gained teachers' and managers' support and enthusiasm for the new initiatives introduced. For example, newly appointed learning coaches identify weaknesses in teaching and help teachers to improve. Teachers value these interventions and are enthusiastic about improving their teaching. They benefit from useful and targeted staff development sessions, and new teachers are highly positive about their induction and support from managers. Staff who were unable to make the required improvements despite support no longer work at the college.
- Leaders have recently invested in middle managers, providing them with useful training to help them perform their tasks more effectively. While such actions are beginning to show

benefit, it is too early to assess the impact of these fully across the college. In some instances, actions for improvement are too vague.

- Managers do not identify the precise improvements that need to be made or implement them quickly enough. Improvement plans are not sufficiently precise to allow leaders to monitor the impact of actions taken well enough. Leaders, governors and managers now know the strengths and weakness of their provision well. Self-assessment is inclusive and sufficiently self-critical. Managers use data well to inform improvement.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have not ensured sufficient speed of improvement since the previous inspection. Particularly, they have not paid sufficient attention to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Since the inception of the Trust and the new local governing board for Richard Taunton, their challenge to senior leaders has sufficient rigour to hasten the pace of change.
- Trust members have carefully managed the college's finances through a period of significant change. They have ensured that sufficient resources are provided to support students.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Students feel safe and are safe. Leaders have well-established clear policies and processes to safeguard students. Managers have appropriate systems in place to check the suitability of staff before employing them.
- Managers make sure that staff complete frequent training that helps them protect students from harm and respond to any concerns. Designated safeguarding leads, governors and safeguarding team members have received appropriate training and are well informed.
- Managers record concerns about safeguarding well, and these are followed up quickly by staff responsible for students' welfare and safety. Students are taught about the dangers of radicalisation and about safeguarding, and know how to report concerns. The knowledge they have about the local risks of radicalisation and extremism is not sufficiently detailed and requires improvement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is uneven across subject areas. In many A-level and level 2 courses students do not make enough progress. Since September 2018, leaders and managers have increased their expectations of teachers and are now supporting them to rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. It is too soon to measure the impact of these changes.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of the detailed information about their students' prior skills and abilities. They do not use such information to plan and deliver challenging lessons. As a result, the most able students find learning activities too easy and the less able find the work too hard and quickly become distracted.
- Teachers do not assess what students have understood and learned. Their checks on

learning are not sufficiently thorough. They do not routinely use appropriate questioning techniques to develop students' independent thinking skills. For example, in one lesson observed, students were not given the opportunity to evaluate fully the reasons for the success or failure of a range of digital media campaigns. In many lessons, confident students dominate question-and-answer sessions to the exclusion of others or teachers answer their own questions.

- Students do not benefit from sufficiently demanding or individualised targets at reviews to help them achieve high grades in their qualifications. Students do not understand their overall targets for improvement. Many A-level students do not reach their expected grades across their programme of study.
- Most students benefit from good feedback on their written work. As a result, students know what they need to do to improve their work and improve and deepen their knowledge of that specific subject.
- Staff carry out effective assessments of students at the start of their programmes to ensure that they study on the most appropriate courses. Their assessments are successful in identifying students' additional learning and support needs. Students are encouraged to take up additional support through a range of drop-in and targeted sessions. These sessions help individuals improve their work and their confidence in their ability.
- Students benefit from an appropriate focus on the importance of good English and mathematics skills within lessons and in their written work. Teachers introduce these subjects into teaching, often making them relevant to their vocational subjects.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers use technical and professional language well to develop students' literacy levels for their chosen careers. In these lessons, there is also an effective focus on developing analytical and evaluative skills.
- Students are proud of their work and the new skills they are developing since starting at the college. For example, students studying the higher project qualification at level 2 are now able to complete research and present it in an academic format.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Students' attendance is low, particularly in English, mathematics and level 2 vocational lessons. Because of this poor attendance, students' progress is slower than it should be.
- The proportion of students that complete work experience or work-related activities linked to their studies is low. As a result, students are not gaining skills they need for employment. Leaders and managers recognise this and have made improvements, but progress is too slow.
- Teachers do not plan and manage tutorials with expertise. Not all teachers display the knowledge needed to deliver the centrally prepared content effectively. As a result, students do not respond positively to the input. Students do not develop their understanding of the important issues covered in these sessions.
- Students are well behaved and courteous in nearly all lessons and around the college. Most students are respectful to each other and to staff and respond positively and quickly to instruction and direction. Students on level 3 courses enjoy their learning, arrive punctually and are keen to learn.

- Students benefit from the support they receive from staff and use the available support sessions well to catch up on missed work or revise areas of work where they have underperformed on assessments. Study areas within the college are used well by students for independent study.
- Students are tolerant and respectful of different beliefs and views. They demonstrate British values in their behaviours and value the diverse student community.
- Students benefit from effective support and information to help them decide on their next steps. Staff help them with university applications and to seek employment. Leaders and managers work collaboratively with local groups to produce useful events for students, including 'industry week', to further assist their decision making. Careers staff use innovative approaches to engage parents and carers in disadvantaged postcodes and offer information about future opportunities for young people. For example, they hold events in local community centres, which provide a more informal setting to talk about higher apprenticeships and higher levels of learning.
- The successes of previous students are promoted well around the college. Posters celebrate their achievements, their grades and their destinations. These create an aspirational learning environment for students.
- Staff provide a useful range of enrichment activities for students. For example, creative arts students are involved in a weekly live radio broadcast, on which students get professional feedback. Additional enrichment opportunities include visits, trips and guest speakers. For example, criminology students experience a day workshop called 'Behind Bars' where former inmates and prison employees talk to them about their experiences.
- Staff provide comprehensive initial advice and guidance before and during enrolment to ensure that students are on an appropriate course relevant to their prior knowledge, skills and career aspirations.
- Leaders and managers provide comprehensive, well-structured support services for vulnerable students. They invest significantly in providing welfare support for students, including counselling, mental health support and the 'No Limits' advice service. Students value these services, and understand how to access them and the contribution they make to ensuring that some students remain in college.
- Students feel safe in college and know to whom they should report any concerns. They appreciate what managers have done to make them feel safe, including the presence of the community support officers and the wearing of ID badges. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in the local community and online.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of students who complete their courses and achieve their qualifications has declined over the past three years. The newly restructured management team has identified the reasons for the decline and has introduced support systems to improve outcomes, but these actions are too recent to have had an impact.
- Students on courses at level 2 or taking A levels do less well and make slower progress than their peers on vocational courses. Too many students on level 2 programmes did not complete their courses in 2017/18. Students on vocational courses at level 3 achieve well and make very good progress from their starting points.

- The proportion of A-level students who achieve the grades they are capable of is low. Managers' actions to improve achievement and progress are taking too long to have an impact in a minority of subjects. As a result, students do not yet make the progress expected of them. This is particularly the case in history, biology and mathematics.
- There is too much variation in students' achievement. For example, vocational students in public services and sport gain high grades and make very good progress, but those studying health and social care and information technology do not.
- The proportion of students who achieve GCSE grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics has declined and is low. However, most students improve their English and mathematics skills at the college as a result of their learning. Students who complete examinations in English and mathematics functional skills achieve well, and achievement rates are higher than in similar providers.
- Leaders and managers monitor and analyse the differences in achievement between groups of students well but have not yet been successful in reducing them all. For example, they know that white male disadvantaged students do not achieve in line with their peers, but have not succeeded in raising their achievements. Managers have invested in new staff and introduced interventions, but it is too early to measure their impact.
- Students benefit from skills that help them to move to their chosen careers, gain employment or move on to higher education. Teachers and support staff prepare students thoroughly for their next steps. The large majority of students who complete their courses at lower levels move on to higher programmes of learning at the college.
- Nearly half of the students who start on level 2 programmes at the college gain places at university when they finish their courses. A similar percentage of students who have applied to university so far this year will be the first in their family to do so.
- Most students studying on level 3 courses complete them. Leaders track student retention well and monitor effectively the reasons why students leave the college early. They offer additional and appropriate support to all early leavers.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 145228 |
| Type of provider | 16 to 19 academy |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 1157 |
| Principal/CEO | Matt Atkinson |
| Telephone number | 02380511811 |
| Website | www.richardtaunton.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) | 12 | 1 | 160 | 56 | 700 | 38 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | | |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | |
| 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 | 25 | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | 0 | | | | | | | |

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 and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners, staff 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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