

# Inspection of Brooklands College

Inspection dates: 10–13 December 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Brooklands College is a general further education college in north Surrey, with two campuses in Weybridge and Ashford. Students come to the college from across Surrey and also from the Spelthorne area of Middlesex. The vast majority of students attend the Weybridge campus.

Students attend full- and part-time courses in 12 subject areas. The college has historic associations with the motor sport, general and aerospace engineering sectors, and these form major areas of provision. Service industries, notably hairdressing and beauty therapy, and construction courses, occupy a growing proportion of provision on both campuses. Around 70% of the college provision is at entry level, or levels 1 and 2. At the time of inspection, there were around 1,300 students on education programmes for young people, 650 apprentices, 400 adult learners and 110 learners attracting high-needs funding.

The college has been in formal intervention from the Further Education Commissioner's team since May 2019. This was a response to concerns about the college's financial position and following the failure of an apprenticeship subcontractor in late 2018. The college's former principal left during the summer of 2019. An interim chief executive officer supported the new principal and chief operating officer during November and December 2019.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Students feel part of a community and enjoy their courses here. Many have high aspirations because of the encouragement and guidance of staff, who foster a close community between learners and teachers.

Students have a choice of career pathways to help them achieve their ambitions. For example, students in engineering subjects pursue a goal to work in high performance motor racing teams or prestigious garages or go on to university. In art, design and media, and on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses at the Ashford site, learners use extensive workshops and production facilities to develop a high standard of practical skills. Apprentices feel valued and well supported. They like the help which their assessors provide with getting ready for the next phase of their employment. Students with high needs feel valued. They overcome the many social barriers that they often start with. As a result, they move to higher level courses and develop the confidence to undertake supported internships and work experience.

Most students and apprentices have clear career aims, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and behave well. Students and apprentices like being treated as adults at the college. They help each other to learn and value highly the professionalism and experience of their teachers. Those who attend regularly participate eagerly in their classes and feel that they can concentrate better than at school. A small minority of students do not attend regularly and thus their learning lacks continuity.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Current leaders and governors now have a realistic grasp of the college's financial position. They work constructively with the Further Education Commissioner's office to make sure the college moves towards the most secure future possible.

Leaders and managers have worked very hard and successfully to improve the quality of education during the past 18 months. Despite serious financial and other pressures, levels of achievement rose in 2018/19. Leaders support staff to help students develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours, achieve their qualifications and move on to further education, training or work. Leaders and managers communicate frequently with staff to keep them informed about the financial options for the college. As a result, though morale is affected, most staff feel informed. A recently formed respect and compassion group provides support for staff who may be concerned.

Senior leaders have improved arrangements for the management of apprenticeship provision. New management of provision has brought significant improvements to quality assurance and has improved liaison with employers. Since the exposure of funding and quality concerns in subcontracted apprenticeship provision, leaders have not engaged in new subcontracting arrangements. By the end of 2019/20, almost all

subcontracted provision will cease. New apprentices are enrolled directly by the college.

Leaders and managers work effectively to plan and provide a curriculum that meets the needs of the local community, including the most disadvantaged learners. They offer clear pathways for students and apprentices to improve their chances of employment or promotion and gain greater independence. Adult learners and students who receive high needs funding benefit from strong support. As a result, they develop good employment and life skills that help them to gain jobs and improve their lives.

Leaders and staff maintain very good links with local employers and industries, for example in motor racing engineering, in aeronautical engineering, and in construction. New curriculum resources in service industries provide students with realistic working environments. These help them to build strong practical and customer service skills.

Students benefit from detailed initial advice and guidance to make sure they are enrolled on the right courses or apprenticeships. They understand the pathways they can follow, and most have clear and realistic career goals that relate well to the employment opportunities in the region.

Teachers know their students well, particularly those who have additional support needs, for example those from Traveller backgrounds, those with family problems and those experiencing financial difficulties. Staff work hard to break down barriers to learning and put strategies in place to help students gain independence and greater control of their lives. In lessons, teachers and support workers make good use of support plans to shape curriculum activity. As a result, students feel well supported and build their subject knowledge and skills successfully, and the large majority make good or better progress.

Students' behaviour is positive and, as a result, they are engaged in lessons and enjoy learning, particularly in vocational areas. In engineering and automotive, teachers manage workshops and classrooms well. The learning environment is orderly and calm, which is important given the potentially hazardous setting and equipment on which students work. Construction and hair and beauty therapy students teach each other some basic skills from their respective curricula. This breaks down traditional gender roles and builds awareness of different sector skills, which helps diverse groups to develop respect for each other.

Despite major improvements to the management of apprenticeships, a small minority of apprentices on sub-contracted provision are not making the progress they should. Too many of these apprentices will not complete their courses within the expected time. Also, a small number of employers in sub-contracted apprenticeship provision do not understand properly the requirement for apprentices to have time set aside for off-the-job learning. As a result, their apprentices find it difficult to connect new theoretical concepts with topics they learned earlier in their courses, and they struggle to apply theory in their workplace practice.

Too many students maintain erratic attendance in engineering, automotive, English and mathematics classes. While attendance on engineering and automotive study programmes has improved during the past year, fewer students attend their English and mathematics classes regularly. Teachers and managers in vocational areas are not diligent in following up non-attendance at English and mathematics classes. Students who miss lessons lack continuity in their learning, especially in functional skills provision. Attendance is generally high in adult, apprenticeship and high needs provision, but pockets of poor attendance do persist across the college.

Teachers do not all benefit from a coherent continuing professional development programme to enhance their curriculum knowledge and maintain up-to-date sector skills. In most curriculum areas teachers benefit from effective development opportunities to improve their teaching skills but leaders have yet to put in place an effective strategy to ensure that all teachers enhance their vocational knowledge and skills.

Leaders have not been able to ensure that information technology resources are adequate to meet staff, apprentices' and students' needs in every subject area. With a curriculum clearly focused on high technology industries, learning resources do not always match sector requirements.

Leaders and managers cannot always rely on accurate, up-to-date information and data to make fully informed decisions about, for example, the performance of sub-contracted provision, or about student attendance. Management information has improved recently, but managers sometimes still have to deal with a number of systems or make do with manual information gathering.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Students and apprentices feel secure and safe at the college and in their workplaces. Staff and students know what to do if they have any concerns. Staff record reported incidents and monitor any actions effectively. Where staff need to make referrals to external agencies they do this rapidly so that learners receive good support.

Leaders apply safe recruitment strategies. They use effective risk assessments for staff waiting for Disclosure and Barring Service checks so that learners are protected from harm.

Students and apprentices complete safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training as part of their induction and refresh their knowledge during tutorials. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the local and broader threats they may face from radicalisation.

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

- Leaders and managers should support vocational staff to monitor more closely students' attendance in the English and mathematics areas of their study programmes. Staff must ensure that students understand the importance of these classes and the important employment skills they bring.
- Apprenticeship managers should improve the monitoring of apprentices' progress in sub-contracted provision, so interventions can be made to ensure that a greater number make good progress and complete their courses within the expected time. Managers must also make sure that all employers in sub-contracted provision give apprentices sufficient off-the-job training time to work on theoretical aspects of their programmes.
- Refresh information technology hardware so that all students, apprentices and teachers can use good quality up-to-date resources that reflect sector expectations.
- Ensure that all staff benefit from a constructive development programme that allows them to update their vocational and/or industry and pedagogical skills and to identify and share good practice.
- Improve management information systems so that college leaders and managers can make fully informed decisions about the performance of provision and about students' attendance.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130825
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<b>Contact number</b>	01932 797700
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brooklands.ac.uk">www.brooklands.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal</b>	Christine Ricketts
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 December 2013
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Parenta Limited

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

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