

# East Surrey College

Monitoring visit report

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	130824
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<b>Inspection date(s):</b>	22–23 January 2020
<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	London Road Redhill Surrey RH1 2JX

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

In early February 2019, East Surrey College, incorporating Reigate School of Art, merged with John Ruskin College to form the East Surrey College Corporation (trading as Orbital South Colleges).

East Surrey College is a general further education college situated in Redhill, Surrey. East Surrey College was inspected in December 2014. At this time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness as good. This was confirmed by a short inspection in October 2017. John Ruskin College is a former sixth form college situated in Selsdon, south Croydon. John Ruskin College was inspected in 2017. Inspectors judged overall effectiveness as requiring improvement.

The merged college provides a range of vocational, further and higher education courses as well as apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit, the college had around 2,500 16- to 18-year-old learners on vocational programmes and 3,500 adult learners. Around 600 apprentices study on a mixture of framework and standards apprenticeships.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the quality of provision so that more learners stay at the college and successfully achieve their goals, particularly for those on level 3 education programmes for young people?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have taken steps so that greater numbers of level 3 learners stay at college and pass their qualifications than in previous years. Learners studying within the creative arts perform particularly well, and many achieve high grades. A substantial majority of learners at John Ruskin College achieve grades that are better than expected, given their starting point. Leaders and managers have accomplished this by developing teaching practice. Leaders and managers at East Surrey College have been unsuccessful in making sure that learners within a few level 3 BTEC courses achieve the grades that they expect.

Learners benefit from their teachers' significant subject and industry experience. Leaders and managers support teachers to remain up to date through industry placements. Teachers exploit their experience to design courses that meet local and

national need. For example, in response to national recruitment, public service teachers teach units related to the police force.

Teachers plan courses carefully so that learners build and develop knowledge and skills logically. Teachers use questioning effectively to check what learners know and understand. They support learners well where there are gaps in understanding. Learners value the individual support teachers give to help them improve their work. Consequently, most learners produce work of the quality expected at this stage in their courses.

Learners are very well informed and prepared for their next steps. Staff provide significant support to help learners make decisions about their future. For example, level 3 motor vehicle learners meet weekly with a careers adviser. Teachers make frequent reference to learners' next steps within lessons. They encourage learners to develop the professional behaviours they will need for employment. For example, level 3 health and social care learners develop active listening skills. This has supported the increasing numbers of learners moving on to higher education, employment or training.

### **What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the quality of apprenticeship provision? Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders acted quickly after the merger to identify and address the cause of poor-quality apprenticeship provision which resulted in low achievement at John Ruskin College. Leaders have enhanced their procedures for monitoring the quality of their apprenticeship provision. They have appointed new managers to develop the quality of apprenticeships, particularly within construction and engineering courses. However, leaders and managers recognise that it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

Apprentices can describe the new skills that they are learning and the benefits that their apprenticeships bring to their companies. For example, those on level 3 electronic principles of engineering apprenticeships benefit from learning to weld and solder. They know how to identify poor work. Those on level 3 early years apprenticeships understand in detail the safeguarding requirements of their job.

Apprentices benefit from carefully planned and structured off-the-job training which helps them learn in a logical and sensible way. They benefit from skilled and experienced teachers who frequently improve their commercial skills. Teachers check individual apprentices' knowledge well when working practically. However, they do not question apprentices in enough depth in group lessons to know what they understand.

Most employers value the skills that apprentices develop during their apprenticeships. For example, apprentices working at Gatwick Airport develop their knowledge of engineering theory and their machine-shop skills. They become better

at identifying the problems that they encounter at work. Employers receive frequent reports from college staff about the progress their apprentices are making. They value the close links they have with college staff that help them inform the training that their apprentices need.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the quality of feedback to enable learners and apprentices to know how they can improve their work? Reasonable progress**

Learners on level 3 courses value the feedback they receive from their teachers. They appreciate the clarity of feedback and frequent discussions with their teachers to review their work. Learners benefit from the range of methods that teachers use. For example, within health and social care, learners are carefully tutored on how to complete peer assessments. Music learners receive helpful and detailed feedback through audio files that helps them understand how to improve their work. For learners who intend to move on to higher education, teachers give feedback that prepares them for academic writing. As a result, learners have a secure knowledge of how to improve their work.

Apprentices working practically receive individual feedback which helps them improve their practical skills. Apprentices share feedback from teachers with assessors which helps them identify how to further improve their practical skills. Apprentices value the different approaches that teachers take to help them understand their feedback. For example, apprentices on level 4 quantity surveying courses appreciate when visual feedback is used to help them understand how to improve.

Most apprentices receive feedback on their written work which enables them to improve their knowledge and skills. For example, early years apprentices receive detailed and useful feedback on their written work. They use this feedback to improve both their written assignments and their spelling and grammar, which helps them gain higher marks and be more effective in their work. As a result of this feedback, apprentices know the progress they are making with the course and understand in detail what they need to do to improve. However, in a few courses, teachers do not always sufficiently explain how apprentices can improve in their written work. In these instances, too few apprentices understand in detail how to improve in this aspect of their work.

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