

# Inspection of Itchen College

Inspection dates:

30 November–3 December 2021

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**


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

## Information about this provider

Itchen College is a medium-sized sixth-form college on the east side of Southampton and is one of three colleges in the city. The college offers a broad range of academic and vocational courses at entry level and levels 1, 2 and 3. Most students are aged 16 to 18 years with around two thirds of students studying at level 3. At the time of the inspection, there were 1327 young people at the college, around 100 adult students, 12 apprentices and 60 learners with high-needs funding.

The proportion of students in Southampton who make better than average progress in their studies, including in English and mathematics, at key stage 4 is significantly below the national rate. Participation rates in higher education locally are among the lowest in the country. Rates of unemployment in Southampton are slightly higher than the regional and national rates. The college does not subcontract any provision.

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

Students at Itchen college enjoy their studies and benefit from learning in a welcoming and inclusive environment where they can achieve their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Staff rightly challenge students to aim high and be aspirational in their career and university choices; choices many would not have considered when they started at the college.

Most young people and adults quickly develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to achieve their qualifications and move on to their next steps of further or higher education, employment or training. Most who apply are successful in achieving places at universities of their first choice.

Students rightly value highly the professional and 'adult' environment in which they learn. They appreciate how effectively staff across the college establish and support this ethos. Students speak with pride about attending the college. They very much appreciate the support they get from their teachers and also from the wider support team such as the library team and student services.

Students develop the skills they need to be successful in life extremely well. Many young students at the college initially lack confidence and/or have had a challenging time in education previously. Because of the highly inclusive and respectful environment created by staff, students feel confident to participate actively in lessons and most, including those students in receipt of high-needs funding, learn from their mistakes in a safe and secure environment. This increases their confidence further and develops and improves their resilience.

Students behave well in and around the college campus and in their interactions with their peers and staff. Students are highly respectful of each other and recognise that their differences are a positive thing to be celebrated.

Students with high needs benefit from an ambitious, well-structured curriculum that builds their knowledge over time and allows them to transfer the skills they learn across different topics. These students are confident, keen to learn and develop employment and independence skills very well.

Students feel very safe at the college. They know that if they have any problems or concerns staff will support them and take any necessary action swiftly.

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

Leaders and managers have worked diligently and effectively to improve the quality of education. They have a clear and highly aspirational vision for all of their students and staff and as a result, students flourish and succeed in their chosen studies.

Leaders and governors have extremely high expectations for students' success. They are committed to providing a very high quality of education that promotes social mobility. Leaders and managers plan and develop a very broad and ambitious curriculum which meets community, local and regional needs well. Leaders ensure that all students, including those with high needs and learning difficulties or disabilities can study subjects that interest them. They offer combinations of courses that students cannot study elsewhere which help them achieve their ambitions. As a result, students attend from across the county and from as far as the Isle of Wight. For example, a recent change to the level 2 curriculum included a more substantial qualification that enabled students to succeed and proceed into further education, apprenticeships or employment. Leaders and managers recently introduced courses in sport and public services at level 3 for students looking for a practical course to run alongside their English and mathematics qualifications.

Teachers are highly skilled in their subjects. They plan and structure learning carefully so that students quickly build on their previous learning and deliver lessons that motivate them. In health and social care, teachers link lessons logically to work experience or case-study material to ensure the learning is set in context and relevant. In criminology, teachers begin by studying the changing awareness of crime before introducing criminological theories that students can then apply successfully.

Teachers know their students well. They plan carefully and fruitfully to successfully support those who need extra help with their learning, and as a result these students make the same swift progress as their peers.

Teachers use assessment effectively to test students' understanding and identify any gaps in students' knowledge. They use their findings to adapt their lessons and fill any knowledge gaps so that students can move on with confidence to the next topic. Teachers and assessors make sure that students and apprentices understand how they can improve their work. They receive well considered and useful feedback to help them improve further, which they do.

Teachers are innovative in terms of re-engaging students with a subject that many have been unsuccessful at previously or did not enjoy. Staff work hard and successfully to ensure that students and parents understand the importance of gaining GCSE mathematics qualifications and this has resulted in improved attendance and punctuality.

Teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they teach and use imaginative and interesting resources to capture the attention of students. For example, students taking A level biology create stop-go motion films to demonstrate the stages of mitosis, using models made from plasticine, wool and pipe cleaners. In sports lessons, students design practical tasks that they use to inform individual training plans.

Teachers highly value the opportunities they have to improve their teaching skills, increase their confidence in the classroom and refresh their subject or curriculum

specialisms. This helps them to support students well and to ensure the curriculum is up to date and relevant. Teachers refer to the teaching triangles that they are part of and how this helps them experiment in the classroom and hone their skills by developing stronger techniques in areas such as questioning and checking understanding. Teachers feel valued and appreciated by leaders and managers and enjoy working at the college.

Staff use recent training on improving mental health well to develop strategies to support students who have become anxious as a result of the pandemic. Students rightly value the ways that staff have supported them to overcome their concerns. Where appropriate, teachers focus carefully on aspects of healthy living and staying physically healthy. For example, students in receipt of high-needs funding have recently learned how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of alcohol abuse.

Leaders and managers offer a range of enrichment activities for students including additional qualifications such as the extended project qualification and a range of additional sports qualifications. Students are not always aware of the opportunities open to them to join in these activities and as a result participation is not very high.

All students, including those with high needs, benefit from high-quality, impartial and relevant careers advice and guidance. They attend useful assemblies and open days where they are able to understand fully the options available to them at universities and apprenticeships at all levels. Students enjoy, for example, talks from guest speakers in health and social care to help them consider their next steps and progression opportunities. A-level accounting students benefit from talks from representatives from prestigious accountancy firms which inspires students to successfully apply for these apprenticeships. Sports students apply for the American sports scholarship scheme for athletes, with high numbers of applicants being successful.

Leaders and managers have a strong and relentless focus on improving students' attendance. They acknowledge that this is an area for improvement. Students understand the need to attend lessons. When they do not attend, staff help them to return to class quickly and catch up with any missed learning.

Employers value the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices develop and use at work. For example, care apprentices learn how to adapt communication to meet the needs of individuals. Leaders and managers do not use the information they have on apprentices' starting points to plan a challenging curriculum. They do not check that employers develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills during their on-the-job training. Leaders and managers do not work sufficiently well with employers to plan apprentices' off-the-job training carefully and to make sure apprentices do not fall behind.

Governors use their areas of expertise in finance, education and community life to oversee improvements at the college well. They use the clear and detailed reports they receive from senior managers to challenge slow progress or concerns about decisions that have been made effectively. The governing body has recently

recruited new governors to increase the strength and support of the college. Governors are proud of the college and how well it serves the local community. They are committed to working closely with leaders and managers to provide high-quality education and training for local people.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Students and apprentices feel safe and know who to report concerns to. They have a basic knowledge of how to protect themselves and others from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Students revisit safeguarding topics throughout the year during tutorial sessions to reinforce their learning.

Leaders, managers and safeguarding staff swiftly identify students that are vulnerable or at risk of harm and support them well. Staff responsible for safeguarding are well trained and experienced. They make sure all staff and governors complete appropriate safeguarding refresher training. Leaders and managers create a safe environment where sexual harassment, bullying and abuse are not tolerated.

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

- Leaders and managers need to improve further students' attendance.
- Leaders and managers must ensure apprentices benefit from well-planned, high-quality off-the-job training and develop their mathematics and English skills beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship.
- Leaders and managers need to further increase the range of, and participation in, enrichment activities to broaden students' personal interests and support their well-being.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130704
<b>Address</b>	Middle Road Bitterne Southampton Hampshire SO19 7TB
<b>Contact number</b>	023 8043 5636
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.itchen.ac.uk">www.itchen.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Alex Scott
<b>Provider type</b>	Sixth-form college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4–6 December 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal Rebecca Stratton, 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 visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Kate Hill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Viki Faulkner	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Hucker	Ofsted Inspector
Stewart Jackson	Senior Her Majesty's Inspector
Ann Monaghan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Barrett-Peel	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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