

Inspection of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 January 2022

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

Information about this provider

Richard Taunton College is a relatively small sixth-form college in Southampton and is part of the Lighthouse Learning Trust. The college offers academic and vocational courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. It has approximately 700 students aged 16 to 18 years, with just over two thirds studying at level 3. Almost a third study level 2 qualifications, with a very small number studying at level 1.

There are around 109 adult students. Of these, 31 are studying on a level 3 access to higher education programme, with others studying English and/or mathematics. There are 44 students who attract high-needs funding, and these students are enrolled across vocational and academic provision.

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

Students enjoy studying at Richard Taunton College. They benefit from excellent support from the staff team. Staff encourage students to see themselves as 'professionals' and to adopt positive behaviours and attitudes to help them succeed in their studies. For example, public services and sports students learn the importance of teamwork and supporting each other as these are vital skills in these industries.

Students behave impeccably in lessons and around the college campus. They value the highly inclusive nature of the college and understand the importance of learning about others and their experiences. This develops further their understanding of tolerance and respect for diversity.

Students benefit from the very calm and harmonious environment. They value the importance placed on respect for all members of the college community. Students, including those with high needs, thrive because of the care and support they receive from their teachers and the wider staff team.

Students develop a range of skills that help them to be successful as students and help them in their future lives. In lessons, they participate with increasing maturity and confidence in group discussions, and work sensibly in small groups or on individual tasks.

Students are taught well by experienced and dedicated teachers who know their students well. Most teachers help students to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time, providing helpful feedback so that they know how well they are doing and what they could do to improve their work.

Students feel extremely safe at the college. They are confident that if they or their friends had any concerns or problems, staff will support them and take any necessary action swiftly and sensitively. They maturely discuss topics such as 'identity' and 'consent' in tutorial sessions, which helps them to gain a deeper understanding of staying safe and supporting each other.

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

Leaders, managers and staff have improved the quality of education for their students since the previous inspection. Staff have worked effectively to ensure that their core values of 'ready, respect and safe' are central to all they do. Staff and students are ready to be successful. They respect each other, and they work and study in a very safe environment.

Leaders and managers know their students well. They have implemented a broad curriculum to meet students' diverse needs and interests. Students appreciate the flexibility of the curriculum offered so that they can choose a personal programme to meet their career goals. Leaders and managers work with a range of external

partners to help review the curriculum. For example, managers worked with the local university to increase the human physiology content of the access to higher education curriculum. As a result, adult students now benefit from a more challenging and relevant curriculum that prepares them well to study midwifery and nursing at university.

Most teachers support students to develop their knowledge and skills through well-taught lessons that include practical demonstrations, theoretical explanations and modelling of good practice. They are successful in helping students to understand increasingly complex theories and concepts over time. Students test their understanding through a good range of tasks and assessments. For example, A-level biology teachers ensured that students deepened their knowledge and understanding of the process of gluconeogenesis by breaking it down into its constituent parts. Students could then apply this learning to the study of homeostasis, completing subsequent tasks to help them remember and apply this learning.

A small number of teachers do not yet plan and use classroom time effectively. Students spend too much time on individual work that does not build on previous learning. This slows the pace of learning for students as they struggle to understand the important initial stages of the topic or to deepen their learning of key concepts.

Most teachers use assessment carefully to identify students' misconceptions, check learning and plan further teaching. They assess students' learning thoroughly and frequently in each subject. Teachers use this information to plan how best to support their students. For example, criminology teachers focused on modelling written answers so that students were more confident and ready for the formal assessments, and sports teachers ensure that students have a good grasp of the importance of good literacy skills to achieve their target grades.

Leaders and managers work successfully with curriculum staff to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers have a good understanding of their strengths and areas of their practice to improve. They value the very good range of training opportunities and share the goal to become outstanding at what they do, so that all students achieve their full potential. For example, A-level English literature teachers attended very useful training that helped them to adopt new strategies to equip students with the skills to analyse unseen poems using appropriate literary techniques.

Leaders, managers and all staff are highly ambitious for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, students benefit from excellent support to reach their potential and enjoy their learning and wider experiences at the college. Well-trained and experienced staff support students with complex needs to develop strategies that help them focus on their learning and remain in college. For example, students make effective use of time-out cards, safe spaces, one-to-one support in and out of the classroom, and sensory support such as noise-cancelling headphones.

Most students benefit from careers advice and guidance at key points of the year. Students use this helpful support from their tutors and specialist staff to make informed decisions about their next steps. However, this is not universal for all students who do not want to apply to higher education.

Students, including adult students, who wish to move on to higher education have excellent support to make successful applications. Students applying for competitive courses, such as in medicine, or to more competitive universities, are very well supported by staff. For example, applicants for medicine benefit from weekly guest speakers from a range of medical backgrounds, which helps them understand the health sector better. Students value the significant support they receive from staff to help them complete their applications, including mock interviews.

Students have a good understanding of respect and diversity. They are confident to discuss these and explore the relevance in their daily lives. For example, A-level literature students discussed topics of abandonment and neglect represented in their reading of 'Frankenstein'. They explored how this may impact on a person's well-being, as well as how this may make them treat others. This also led to a mature discussion about the notion of individual freedom versus social responsibilities.

Leaders and managers focus relentlessly on the experience of their students. They have a good understanding of their many strengths, as well as priorities for improvement. While many improvements have been rapid and successful, their actions to date have not had an impact on improving students' attendance to the levels they would like. This means that too many students are missing lessons and, in particular, miss tutorial sessions. Leaders and managers have also been slow to ensure that all students know whether they will be completing work experience and if so, when. Although those studying sport, performing arts, and health and social care do have a good awareness, too many students do not.

Governors are highly experienced and know their college well. They have worked with leaders to create a transparent and critical culture of improvement. They support and challenge the senior team to continue to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff successfully promote a strong culture of safeguarding and well-being. Students speak very highly about how they benefit from this culture. For example, the LGBTQ+ group feels very safe, with a strong culture of respect for differences in which students and staff will swiftly challenge any inappropriate behaviour effectively.

Through frequent training and refresher sessions, staff are confident in recognising any concerns and reporting them to the designated safeguarding lead. For example, teachers recognise the challenges posed by the different restrictions during the pandemic. They identify and provide additional support for students with anxiety.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve teaching and learning so that those teachers who do not yet make productive use of lesson time to teach subject knowledge and skills receive appropriate training and support to do so.
- Ensure that all students who do not plan to go university receive timely and relevant advice and guidance about the opportunities available to them when they leave college.
- Implement the work experience strategy so that all relevant students benefit from suitable work experience and work-related learning related to the subjects they study and to their career aims.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145228
Address	Hill Lane Southampton SO15 5RL
Contact number	02380 511811
Website	www.richardtaunton.ac.uk
Principal	Paul Swindale
Provider type	16–19 academy
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 January 2019
Main subcontractors	None

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. 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

Ann Monaghan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Beale	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Cox	Her Majesty's Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Her Majesty's Inspector

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