

# Inspection of Croydon College

Inspection dates: 1 to 4 October 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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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>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Information about this provider

In March 2019, Croydon General Further Education College (Croydon) and Coulsdon Sixth Form College (Coulsdon) merged to become Croydon College. Both Croydon and Coulsdon are in the London Borough of Croydon. They provide education and training from entry level through to level 6 in a wide variety of vocational and academic subjects across the four provision types and a wide range of subjects.

At the time of the inspection, there were 2769 learners on education programmes for young people. Around two thirds study at the Croydon campus, most on a range of level 1, 2 and 3 courses. Ten learners were on a T level in education and early years and five on a T level in mechanical engineering. A high proportion of learners also complete qualifications in English and mathematics. Around a third of learners study at Coulsdon Sixth Form College on a range of A levels and level 3 courses.

There were around 2600 adult learners studying at the Croydon campus across a wide range of academic and vocational courses. A high proportion of learners speak English as an additional language and study ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses. Around 160 learners study access to higher education courses.

Two hundred apprentices study a range of level 2, 3 and 4 apprenticeships. A high proportion of these study apprenticeship standards in construction. Smaller numbers study standards in professional services.

There were 200 learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who receive high needs funding. Over half of these learners study a range of vocational and academic courses. Around 70 learners study supported education, life and enterprise courses and supported internships at the Croydon campus. Twenty-one learners with complex needs study at Coulsdon.

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

Learners and apprentices say that as soon as they walk into college, they feel safe. They have a good understanding of the risks present in the local area and staff have helped them to develop their resilience and knowledge of how to protect themselves from issues, such as mobile telephone theft. Through the redesigned tutorial programme, teachers and external partners teach learners and apprentices about emergency first aid and the dangers associated with drug and knife crime. Many learners say the college is a safe haven.

Most young learners at Coulsdon college, including those with SEND, enjoy a much-improved curriculum since the most recent inspection. This is because leaders and teachers have focused on improving teaching and assessment in A levels and level 3 courses. On many courses, teachers help learners remember what they have learned through frequent assessment. They track learners' progress closely and give learners practical activities to consolidate what they have been taught and apply their new skills. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications at Coulsdon has increased markedly. Learners on courses in physics, psychology, science, mathematics, and art and design achieve particularly well.

Apprentices improve their practical skills quickly. For example, carpentry apprentices learn how to measure accurately and use this skill to cut wood for skirting boards and prepare floors for latex levelling and tiling. Building services apprentices learn to use machines to create the right size thread on piping. They use equipment safely and with confidence. A high proportion of apprentices pass their final assessments and on the first attempt.

Most adult learners with English as an additional language learn in inclusive and supportive environments. Through their courses, they learn what it is like to live in Britain and be part of a community. They discuss the importance of respecting each other's culture, democracy and the rule of law. This helps them to prepare for their UK citizenship test. They gain confidence in their speaking skills and remember new vocabulary. Teachers support them effectively to progress to their next steps.

Learners with high needs have good attendance and are punctual to their lessons. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and accept others' differences. Staff give learners with complex emotional needs effective support to help them self-regulate and take part in lessons. Learners on life and enterprise courses gain employability and business skills through a range of enterprise projects and work-related activities, such as working in their own shop and for their coffee delivery service. Learners improve their independence through their studies and time at the college.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work effectively with a range of civic, community and education partners. Since the previous inspection, they have increased their engagement with stakeholders to develop their curriculum offer in key priority areas, such as construction, health and social care and high needs provision, to respond to skills needs. For example, they worked with employers in construction to develop a niche apprenticeship programme in buildings crafts to meet the demand for non-domestic plumbing professionals. In partnership with Roehampton university, the college teaches a high number of nurses and midwives to help meet the large demand in this area.

Leaders work closely with key strategic stakeholders. This includes the South London Partnership, Croydon Bid, Croydon Youth Consortium and sector bodies. This helps leaders to understand and share local labour market intelligence and plan for the skills needs in the area. Leaders have designed the curriculum to meet local priorities. For example, they increased the number of ESOL courses for the growing number of young asylum seekers in the area. They work closely with charities to create bespoke projects to support vulnerable groups. Stakeholders speak positively about their partnership with leaders and see the college as an integral part of the community.

Leaders and managers have increased employer involvement in the design of the curriculum since the previous inspection. For example, in health and social care at Coulsdon, managers responded to employer's requests to include physiological disorders in the curriculum. Leaders recognise, however, the need to involve more employers. They have sensible plans in place and projects on the horizon. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders, staff and those responsible for governance have taken effective actions to improve the quality of education, behaviour and attendance at both campuses. They have rightly focused their attention on improving the curriculum, and quality of teaching and assessment for young learners and those who have high needs. They have made notable improvements across these areas. This has led to increased and high achievement rates in many subjects for learners and apprentices.

Leaders have set high expectations for learners' attendance. Learners' behaviour is good, and attendance rates have increased and are now high on most courses. Not all young learners are punctual to their lessons, however, and leaders recognise this continues to be an area for improvement.

Leaders and managers have increased the staff time and resources available to help teachers to improve their teaching. Leaders identify areas for improvement accurately through their quality assurance activities and prioritise support to these areas. As a result, through improved teacher training, the quality of teaching in many subjects, such as health and social care, A levels and GCSE mathematics has

improved, as have learners' achievements. Leaders continue to support areas such as, sports, hairdressing, and engineering, where teaching and achievement rates have not improved sufficiently.

The arrangements for governance are effective. The governing board have strengthened their support of and challenge to senior leaders. They have improved their oversight of college performance through accurate reporting and data, which helps them to hold leaders and managers to account and focus on what matters. They set high expectations of the senior team to improve quickly, and to make realistic and accurate predictions about learners' achievements and attendance.

Leaders and teachers plan and teach a mostly challenging and ambitious curriculum for young and adult learners. In information technology (IT), teachers ensure learners have a holistic understanding of IT beyond the requirements of their qualification. For example, in cybersecurity, they teach learners how to use a range of software functions for protection without compromising business performance. In the early years T-level course employers give helpful presentations to learners that cover knowledge outside their taught curriculum. They teach learners about diverse cultures, religions and the importance of knowing a child's family history. This helps learners understand how to adapt their behaviour and communication with families.

Leaders and managers use the funding they receive for learners with high needs well. They coordinate the range of specialist therapeutic staff, including speech and language, vision support and occupational therapy, effectively to ensure that learners get the individual support they need. Teachers teach an interesting and varied specialist curriculum for learners. Support staff give learners effective but not too much support to help them to keep up with their peers. Support staff use assistive technology both in and outside of class effectively to help learners become more independent. Most learners with high needs achieve their qualifications and meet their targets.

Apprenticeship staff work closely and effectively with employers to align on-and-off the job training. Employers appreciate the opportunity to influence how and when their apprentices attend lessons. They value the skills and behaviours their apprentices develop. For example, business administration apprentices learn how to use effective teamwork skills when supporting colleagues with projects. This helps them to create positive relationships with a range of stakeholders.

Most teachers are experienced, knowledgeable and qualified in their subjects. They use a range of effective teaching strategies to help learners and apprentices recall, apply and consolidate what they have learned. ESOL teachers of young learners use a calm and patient approach to encourage learners to take part in lessons. They engage learners' interests by linking tasks clearly to real life situations, such as how to manage monthly budgets. In art and design, teachers first demonstrate digital skills using IT so that learners can use these skills effectively when they design, draw and illustrate basic landscapes. Teachers give learners and apprentices good support to prepare for their final examinations.

Teachers and assessors make effective use of a range of assessment methods. Most teachers frequently recap previous knowledge and use effective questioning to probe learners to expand on answers. In A level and level 3 courses, teachers use the results of their assessments well to identify gaps in learners' knowledge. They then direct them to specific research to review or set practical tasks to help them to close these gaps. However, in a minority of subjects such as a few vocational level 1 courses, adult ESOL and access courses, teachers do not check that learners have mastered taught skills or retained knowledge before they move on to more complex content. On these occasions, learners struggle to keep up in lessons and get confused when new ideas are introduced.

Teachers give learners and apprentices helpful feedback about their work. For example, criminology teachers annotate clearly where learners should clarify their answers with examples. Teachers correct and challenge misconceptions in learners' work. They ensure most learners produce work at the required standard. On a minority of occasions, apprenticeship teachers do not always mark and correct errors in apprentices' work. As a result, a minority of apprentices do not master the correct spelling of important technical terminology.

Leaders, managers and staff set high standards for learners' and apprentices' behaviour and attitudes at both campuses. Staff challenge learners appropriately about any behaviour that does not meet these standards in and out of the classroom. Learners and apprentices are polite, courteous and respectful. They mix well in communal areas, such as the canteen and common room. Learners are motivated to learn and develop a range of professional behaviours and skills because of their positive learning experience. For example, learners with high needs on vocational courses increase their confidence and communication skills to speak up in lessons.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and staff have made improvements to the personal development curriculum for learners and apprentices. They have redesigned the tutorial programme to teach a range of important and useful topics. These include healthy and appropriate relationships, consent, equality and diversity and a range of topics to help learners understand how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation. This helps learners to extend their knowledge beyond their academic and vocational studies. Learners and apprentices have access to a wide range of extra activities, such as trips, sport clubs and competitions.

Leaders and staff give learners and apprentices effective careers advice and guidance. This includes information from guest speakers and employers. Learners who want to progress to university get good support with their application and personal statements. Learners with high needs enjoy tailored careers guidance sessions to discuss their next steps and the actions they need to take to move towards these goals. Most learners and apprentices know the options available to them on completion of their course. A high proportion of learners move on to the next level of course, further, or higher education or into employment.

Most young learners and adults benefit from work-related activity during their course. This includes a good range of highly relevant employer projects briefs. For example, in IT, learners with an interest in game design completed an employer-led project, which gave them insight into the gaming industry. While the proportion of young learners who complete external work experience has increased since the previous inspection, not all learners, including those with high needs, have had the opportunity to do so. Leaders are working to increase the number of work experience opportunities available, but it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders and managers provide staff with a range of relevant professional development and training opportunities. Teachers and staff have positive attitudes to their work and engage in training activities to develop their skills and improve the experience for learners and apprentices. Teachers who support learners with high needs in mainstream courses have completed generic training about SEND. However, they do not always have the right training to help them understand their learners' specific individual needs.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications, where the quality of teaching is not consistently good, such as sports, engineering and hair and beauty.
- Increase the proportion of learners, including those with high needs, who attend external work experience opportunities.
- Involve more employers in the design of the curriculum.
- Ensure all teachers check learners' understanding thoroughly and effectively.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Caireen Mitchell
<b>Provider type</b>	Further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 to 9 February 2023
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	n/a



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Principal of the Coulsdon campus, 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

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