

Inspection of HRUC (Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges)

Inspection dates: 12 to 15 November 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Harrow College and Uxbridge College merged in September 2017. A further merger with Richmond upon Thames College took place in January 2023 to create Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge College (HRUC). HRUC is a large general further education college with five campuses situated across north and southwest London.

At the time of the inspection, there were 8,970 learners on education programmes for young people, most on a range of level 1, 2 and 3 vocational and A-level courses. Just over half study at Uxbridge. Twenty learners were on a T level in design and development for engineering and 21 were on a T level in building services engineering for construction. Forty-three learners were on a T level in education and childcare at the Hayes campus. A high proportion of learners also study qualifications in English and mathematics.

There were about 3,900 adult learners studying mostly at the Uxbridge and Harrow campuses. HRUC offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses for adult learners, including access to higher education courses. Most adult learners speak

English as an additional language and study English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.

Five hundred and seventy-seven apprentices study a range of level 2, 3 and 4 apprenticeships. A high proportion of these study installation and maintenance electrician and engineering technician apprenticeships. Smaller numbers study apprenticeships in professional services.

There were 851 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 across the different campuses. HRUC has three specialist high-needs offers for learners with complex needs at the Uxbridge, Harrow and Richmond campuses. The college offers three supported internships programmes for learners with high needs.

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

Learners and apprentices thoroughly enjoy their time at the college, where they feel valued and cared for by staff. Learners are polite and respectful. Most have very good attendance and arrive on time for lessons ready to learn. Learners in the supported learning area have particularly high attendance.

Learners and apprentices benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance. Access to higher education and A-level learners receive very effective support with their applications to higher education and attend useful presentations given by guest speakers from universities. Young learners attend helpful careers fairs and use the college career hub for support with job applications and CV writing. Learners and apprentices make well-informed choices about their next steps and go on to positive destinations such as university courses in the medical sciences and apprenticeships in engineering.

Young learners benefit from a broad and varied curriculum. They participate well and value the opportunities the college provides to broaden their knowledge of the subjects they study. For example, performing arts learners visit venues, museums and trade shows, and T-level engineering and manufacturing learners visit car manufacturers and water utility companies. Almost all young learners benefit from meaningful, well-planned, high-quality work experience. For example, hospitality students work in local restaurants and digital T-level students work for large-scale companies such as Heathrow Airport, where they learn the demands of working in a commercial environment.

Adult learners study in an inclusive and supportive environment. They participate in their lessons with enthusiasm and take pride in their work. They gain confidence quickly and develop a good knowledge of their subjects. For example, beauty therapy learners benefit from demonstrations from beauty product manufacturers in which they learn about the latest beauty products and techniques. ESOL learners study additional qualifications such as employability skills and mathematics, which helps them move on to higher level qualifications and into employment.

Apprentices improve their practical skills quickly. Teachers plan effective practical and theory sessions to enable apprentices to practise and apply their new skills. For example, electrical apprentices learn how to participate safely in light sensor soldering and testing and how to record their findings accurately. Apprentices value the support provided by tutors and assessors. For example, assessors prepare apprentices thoroughly for their final assessment. Level 3 business administrator apprentices practise presentation skills throughout their apprenticeship and receive effective support in building their portfolio of evidence. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship is high. Most apprentices continue in employment, and a few gain promotions at work.

Learners with high needs make good progress in developing confidence and overcoming anxieties at college. They benefit from an effective personal, social and health education programme that includes hygiene, self-care, relationships and

healthy lifestyles. They use the knowledge they gain to make good decisions in their personal lives, to develop their social skills and to improve their mental health. Most learners with high needs achieve their qualifications and personal learning goals.

Learners and apprentices feel safe, including when working online. They know how to report any concerns that they may have about their safety. Most learners and apprentices have a good understanding of local risks and the risks associated with being influenced by someone with extremist views.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work very effectively with a diverse range of employers and stakeholders to understand local and regional skills needs. They are proactive in responding to these needs. For example, leaders from the college led a feasibility study into the food and drink industry with the chamber of commerce. They conducted research to understand fully the way in which health and social care students make decisions about choosing careers in the sector. As a result, they adjusted the curriculum to provide clear progression pathways for students. Stakeholders see the college as a trusted partner that supports economic and social development in the area very effectively.

Leaders have well-established partnerships that directly impact on the curriculum offer, including with Heathrow Airport. With the college, the Heathrow Inclusive Learner Partnership provides opportunities for learners with SEND to gain work experience in the airport's supply chain. The new Aviation Generation course provides students with a pathway to careers in the aviation industry. Leaders collaborate effectively with other further education providers to reduce duplication and coordinate the curriculum offer in the area.

Across the courses they offer, leaders, managers and teachers work consistently and effectively with stakeholders in designing and teaching the curriculum. For example, managers work very effectively with NHS trusts to shape the team leader apprenticeship to reflect the NHS context. Leaders consult with engineering employers when designing their mechatronic engineering workshop to make sure learners and apprentices can access industry standard equipment and develop the skills that their industry requires. Leaders in the ESOL department work effectively with a range of local employers and stakeholders to make sure that they teach learners the skills stakeholders require. For example, teachers have included interview practice and work simulation role play in ESOL classes.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have managed the merger with Richmond College very well. Leaders have made rapid progress in most of the areas requiring improvement at Richmond. Managers from across the college group meet frequently

to create a shared vision for how they teach different subjects, and to share good practice and resources. Staff at Richmond have embraced the change. They value the opportunity to collaborate with managers from across the group.

Leaders and governors have high expectations for students and apprentices. Leaders use data very effectively to monitor the progress of apprentices and learners. They use the information well to support managers, hold them to account and improve the quality of teaching for learners and apprentices. This has contributed to the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications at Richmond increasing markedly since the merger. Most learners at HRUC achieve their qualifications and many achieve high grades. However, in a few subjects, such as business and information technology, achievement remains too low.

Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the training they offer. They evaluate the quality of education effectively and use their evaluations to prioritise training, such as in how to prepare students for examinations, revision techniques and effective questioning. The training they provide has had a positive impact. The proportion of learners and apprentices who pass their examinations has increased and is high in most subjects. Leaders recognise they have more work to do in a few areas where achievement is still too low.

Teachers have good, up-to-date knowledge of the subjects they teach. They are skilled at making their subjects interesting for learners and use a range of effective strategies so that learners can remember what they are taught. In psychology, teachers facilitate discussions of research findings about memory effectively. In ESOL, teachers focus well on learners' pronunciation. They use clapping to help learners identify the number of syllables in each word and rhyme to help learners remember. Health and social care learners have learned how to explain accurately the functions of the different organs of the body and the flow of blood around the heart. They have developed a good understanding of the different communication methods used in health and social care settings, including those used with people who struggle to communicate verbally.

Teachers mostly use a range of assessment techniques effectively. They know their learners well and use assessment to adapt teaching, organise their activities and correct misconceptions. For example, on the T-level early years course, teachers set helpful reflection-based projects through which learners explore emotional development and self-regulation in children. Teachers use questions well to probe learners' understanding and encourage them to answer. However, in a small minority of cases teachers do not check learners' understanding sufficiently well through their questioning or when setting group activities.

Teachers plan the curriculum well to develop apprentices' and learners' knowledge and use of English and mathematics. For example, adult learners on access courses develop good academic writing skills. Engineering learners and apprentices develop advanced mathematics skills when creating design briefs for new product specifications. Learners and apprentices who take GCSE examinations in English and

mathematics make very good progress from their starting points. However, pass rates for learners with high needs who take English and mathematics qualifications and for adults who take functional skills qualifications are not high enough.

Apprenticeship staff work effectively with employers to make sure that apprentices learn the knowledge and skills they need for their jobs. Engineering staff offer different pathways and tailor units so that apprentices gain skills specific to their employer's needs. Hairdressing tutors plan the curriculum to enable apprentices to practise and apply their new skills from early in their training. Employers value the skills and behaviours their apprentices develop. For example, apprentices work effectively as part of a team early in their training, and they take responsibility for their own and their colleagues' safety when in workshops.

Leaders and teachers plan and teach a challenging and ambitious curriculum for young and adult learners. In business and enterprise, teachers arrange workshops by staff from global companies on marketing and finance, and learners visit the Bank of England to understand how to apply the theory of banking. Teachers on the access to medicine course link teaching about cells in the immune system to future research projects about blood, disease and immunity. This helps learners develop an understanding of the importance of research and its impact on the medical profession.

Leaders make good use of high-needs funding to provide individualised support for learners with high needs. Learners study a curriculum at a level to suit their needs, interests and career aspirations. However, teachers do not consistently set clear enough targets for learners. They do not routinely include sufficient opportunities for learners to work towards achieving their education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes. Teachers at Richmond do not track learners' progress well enough. As a result, in a few cases, they are unclear about how much progress learners make.

Leaders and teachers plan a range of good-quality personal development opportunities for learners and apprentices. For example, young learners benefit from money management programmes, adult learners attend book clubs and teaching assistant apprentices learn about supporting children with epilepsy. Learners and apprentices benefit from interesting trips and guest speakers that enhance their experience. These activities help learners and apprentices develop friendships and expand their interests and talents.

Leaders provide staff with a range of relevant professional development and training. For example, new middle leaders benefit from leadership and management programmes, including how to deal with conflict and manage change. This helps managers to adapt to their new roles, support their staff and manage performance effectively. Teachers learn about neurodiversity, managing learners' behaviour and restorative practice during staff training days. Teachers and staff use these skills well to manage learners' behaviour in classrooms and around the college.

Governors contribute positively to and have good oversight of the college's performance. They have a range of suitable skills, such as in finance, human

resources and business, that they use very effectively to support the senior leadership team. For example, they provided help with the financial planning for the merger and the development plans for the Richmond site. Governors understand clearly the college's strengths and areas to improve. They support and challenge leaders effectively.

Leaders value, respect and support their staff. Leaders provide a range of useful well-being support for staff. For example, staff can access counsellors and mental health first aiders if needed. Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Train teachers to use assessment effectively to check learners' and apprentices' understanding and adapt their teaching appropriately.
- Improve outcomes for learners on business, information technology and access to higher education courses at the Richmond campus.
- Set targets for learners with high needs that link clearly to their EHC plans.
- Increase the proportion of learners with high needs who achieve qualifications in English and mathematics.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130446
Address	Park Road Uxbridge UB8 1NQ
Contact number	01895853333
Website	www.hruc.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Keith Smith
Provider type	Further education college
Dates of previous inspection	22 to 25 February 2022
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the group 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

Paul Manning, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Joanna Walters	His Majesty’s Inspector
Pamela Wallace	Ofsted Inspector
Christina Christou	Ofsted Inspector
Saskia Niderost	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Baxter	Ofsted Inspector
Errol Ince	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Moynihan	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Dyson	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Allen	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Thompson	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Bowman	His Majesty’s Inspector
Winsome Aldred	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Hughes	His Majesty’s Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024