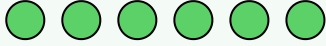



# Richard Taunton Sixth Form College

Address: Hill Lane, Southampton, Southampton, SO15 5RL

Unique reference number (URN): 145228

## Inspection report: 14 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

### **Safeguarding standards met**


The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

#### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

### **1. Inclusion, and leadership and governance**

Expected standard	
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## Expected standard

### Inclusion

### Expected standard

Leaders create a highly inclusive culture through their policies, systems and everyday practices. Learners, many facing multiple obstacles, quickly feel they belong to the college community and integrate well. Staff identify learners' needs early using suitable methods. They make sure that there is tailored support in place from the start of learners' time at college, regardless of their background. For example, staff arrange help with childcare for young parents and provide equipment and learning materials for learners with financial barriers. Staff monitor learners' progress accurately. This enables them to increase or reduce the support given as necessary over time.

Leaders invest well in measures to help learners thrive. For example, specialist practitioners provide training for teachers in how to give high-quality educational and wellbeing support for learners with autism. Leaders have recently invested in specialist physical and IT equipment, which means that learners with particular needs have the resources they need to succeed. However, it is too soon to see consistent impact across different groups of learners. Achievement rates, while improving, remain lower for key groups, such as those with high needs. In part, this is because low attendance limits the impact of new interventions.

### Leadership and governance

### Expected standard

Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the college. Since the previous inspection, they have created an ambitious strategic plan that reflects well their highly inclusive core values. The subjects offered contain a suitable balance of vocational, academic and technical education that aligns well with their learners' starting points and local skills gaps. Leaders and governors have established effective partnerships with employers and sector bodies to shape the courses offered. For example, in T-level adult nursing, close collaboration with NHS partners has influenced curriculum content so that learners acquire essential clinical skills before their work placements.

Leaders and governors have significantly strengthened quality monitoring systems. They have an accurate understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development, using reliable data to identify key priorities such as improved retention, achievement and attendance. Leaders' actions have begun to have an impact. However, outcomes for A levels and most applied general qualifications, as well as for learners with high needs relative to their peers, remain too low.

Leaders have planned and implemented a successful professional development programme. Teachers and support staff benefit from structured learning days, peer observation and the systematic sharing of best practice. Staff value this training. Typically, they teach and manage behaviour well. Leaders manage staff wellbeing effectively.

Governors have suitable relevant expertise. Leaders provide them with accurate information that helps them to identify areas for development and celebrate success. They provide suitable challenge and support to help leaders take forward necessary improvements.

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## 2. Education programmes for young people

Expected standard	●
Needs attention	● ●

### Expected standard ●

#### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders and managers plan the curriculum carefully so that learners acquire new knowledge and skills in a logical order. For example, in performing arts, teachers start by teaching characterisation, technique and vocal projection. As the course progresses, students draw on this knowledge and skills as they take on performing roles in final major project performances.

Leaders have strengthened the way that they monitor the quality of teaching. Their improved analysis has led to targeted actions that are contributing to more consistent, positive, classroom practice across GCSE, A level and vocational subjects. Teaching staff typically draw on their subject and industry knowledge to explain concepts clearly. Teachers use effective techniques to improve students' knowledge recall and application of new skills. For example, in fine art, teachers use mannequins to demonstrate how to draw humans to scale and in the correct proportion.

Teachers use assessment well to check students' understanding and correct misconceptions. For example, staff use mini whiteboards very well in A-level mathematics to check students understand how to apply binomial expansions accurately before moving on. Staff generally provide students with constructive feedback so that students know the steps they need to take to improve their work.

Staff provide appropriate support for learners who need extra help, including those improving their mathematics and English skills and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers offer useful targeted support sessions which help students improve or catch up on their work.

Leaders ensure that their offer meets the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes.

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## Needs attention ●

### Achievement

Needs attention ●

In most vocational and academic subjects, learners do not make enough progress from their starting points. Too many do not achieve the grades of which they are capable. However, the large proportion of learners taking mathematics and English GCSEs typically make progress from their starting points, and a substantial number improve their grades.

Too few learners complete their courses. Leaders have a sharp focus on improving retention. However, it is too soon to see the impact of their actions.

Learners typically produce work that is at the standard expected for their course. The quality of their work improves over time. For example, in history, students develop their ability to analyse evidence. Their written work shows improved historical reasoning.

Learners develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours across study programmes. For example, in physics practical work, learners test electrical connections, and indications with increasing confidence.

### Participation and development

Needs attention ●

Leaders have identified that attendance is too low. They have started to take effective actions to help learners to overcome barriers to attending lessons. However, staff do not always apply these consistently well. As a result, attendance shows limited improvement.

Tutors teach learners about a wide range of topics through a carefully planned upskill programme. These sessions include learning about fundamental British values and celebrating diversity. Learners typically develop a sound understanding of key themes. However, a few learners in level 2 foundation learning struggle to relate the themes to their own lives confidently.

Learners study in calm and purposeful learning environments and generally behave well. For example, creative arts staff create studio spaces that replicate industry. Learners adopt professional behaviours and work well with others.

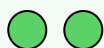
Suitably qualified careers staff provide learners with advice about their next steps. Learners are aware of pathways within and beyond the college because staff prepare them well. Learners applying to university have a good understanding of different courses that meet their aspirations and potential grades.

Staff make sure learners take part in effective work-related learning opportunities. They benefit from masterclasses, industry placements and talks from employers. These activities are preparing them well for work.

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### 3. Adult learning programmes

Expected standard



Needs attention



#### Expected standard

##### Achievement

Expected standard 

Retention on Adult GCSE English and mathematics courses has improved over the past 2 years. Learners who remain on programme, including disadvantaged learners, achieve well.

In previous academic years, leaders ran adult Access to Higher Education courses in health and social care and midwifery. Learners on these courses achieved well. At the time of the inspection there were no learners on Access to Higher Education courses, but they remain part of the curriculum offer.

Adult learners develop relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours from their starting points. They gain confidence and apply learning well. This helps with preparing them for their next steps because many study English and mathematics GCSE so that they can progress in employment or move into higher education. Learners produce work that shows clear improvement over time.

##### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have created an adult curriculum for English and mathematics GCSE that is well sequenced and designed to build on prior learning. The curriculum prepares learners well for further study and life, not solely for passing examinations.

Staff assess learners before they join to ensure that they have the right prior skills and knowledge to undertake GCSE courses. They also identify any barriers to learning so that teachers can adapt lessons to meet individual needs. Teachers know their learners well, including those who require adjustments, and only provide additional support when it is appropriate.

Teachers are experienced and well qualified. They teach well. In English they use a range of techniques to support understanding, such as highlighting structures in texts, using acronyms, encouraging repetition, recall, practice, and application. Learners are encouraged to answer aloud and share ideas, which helps create a safe and supportive environment. Teachers use questioning well to introduce appropriate challenge.

Teachers use assessment effectively. They routinely check understanding before moving on to new content. For example, in mathematics they set frequent tests and provide detailed verbal and written feedback, ensuring learners understand how to improve and what steps

to take next. In English, teachers use specialist terminology well, enabling learners to identify language features confidently, such as adjectives, metaphors, and similes, which prepares them effectively for examinations, employment, and wider life.

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## Needs attention

### Participation and development

Needs attention 

Leaders have introduced processes to track and re-engage absent learners. Teachers understand the barriers that make it hard for adult learners to attend well. However, the impact of these new measures is not yet evident and attendance to adult evening classes remains too low.




Staff have created a respectful and safe environment. Adult learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, say they feel safe, valued and able to study well. Teachers make sure that all learners feel included and can contribute comfortably. This enables teachers to explore sensitive topics with learners openly in age-appropriate ways.

Adult learners are aware of the careers service available at the college, should they need it to find support for their next steps. Many are already employed and they understand their progression routes well.

Learners complete an induction pack that includes information about keeping safe from radicalisation and extremism. In a few instances, learners have limited understanding of how it relates to them. However, learners are confident about reporting concerns and trust the college to respond effectively.

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## 4. Provision for learners with high needs

Expected standard	
Needs attention	 

## Expected standard

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious and flexible curriculum for learners with high needs. There are bespoke pathways that include routes from level 1 and 2 qualifications to level 3 awards. Learners can study at a pace that allows them to secure subject knowledge and achieve their English and mathematics qualifications where needed.

Learners with high needs who study vocational subjects benefit from specialist teachers who communicate theory clearly and link learning to real workplace expectations. They successfully develop the English, mathematics, digital and communication skills they need for their next steps.

Suitably qualified staff work well with learners. They typically set targets based on the education, health and care plans and communicate these clearly to teaching staff, along with details of needs and support strategies. Teachers and learning support staff use this information well. They are responsive to emerging needs and adjust support as learners become more independent.

Leaders have strengthened their specialist teaching team. Specialist practitioners train teachers in how to adapt their teaching to include learners with high needs even better. They design resources that aid processing and organisation. Learners with high needs find their lessons and homework accessible and enjoyable.

Teachers give learners clear feedback on assessed work. This enables learners to correct and improve their submissions so they can aim for higher grades. Teachers and support staff also set learners self-assessment activities so that they develop proofreading, error analysis and study skills. Learners become more independent.

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## **Needs attention** ●

### **Achievement**

**Needs attention** ●

Learners with high needs generally develop relevant skills and knowledge. They typically make progress from their starting points in line with their peers. This is reflected in the high quality of their written and practical work, which meet the expected standard for the level of their qualification.

Learners with high needs do not achieve their qualifications well enough, in part because too many do not complete their courses. While leaders' actions have contributed to closing the gap between the achievement of learners with high needs and their peers, achievement remains lower.

Staff set learners with education, health and care plans appropriate targets so that they develop their communication and social skills. In common with other learners with high needs, they are being well prepared for adult life. Learners with high needs move on to positive destinations, whether internally to higher level courses or to apprenticeships, university or employment.

### **Participation and development**

**Needs attention** ●

Leaders recognise that attendance at lessons and other activities is too low. They have a keen focus on helping learners attend. Leaders train tutors and teachers to help learners with college avoidance behaviours. Staff provide learners with extensive support, involving

families where appropriate. Targeted interventions and adapted programmes and timetables have contributed to some improvements for individual learners.

Staff have created safe and calm classroom environments that enable learners with high needs to focus on their work without distractions. A sensory room and quiet work areas provide additional spaces for learners who need some quiet time during the day.

Staff know their learners well. They support their individual needs and recognise changes in learners' behaviour, which they follow up through wellbeing checks. Learners with high needs behave well.

Leaders and tutors have developed an engaging tutorial programme that covers useful, age-appropriate information about a range of topics such as healthy relationships. They revisit topics frequently so that learners develop a good understanding over time.

Careers staff work with groups and individual learners with high needs to guide them about their next steps. They teach them employability skills such as communication, teamworking, organising their work, time management and leadership.

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## **What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider**

Because of the highly inclusive nature of the college community, all learners feel welcome and safe as soon as they arrive, whatever their background. Leaders reduce financial and educational barriers to attendance as far as they can while maintaining a keen focus on building learners' resilience. Most learners are motivated; they work hard in class and attend lessons well. However, too many learners across education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes and high needs provision have low attendance, and this affects the extent to which they can fulfil their potential. Too many young learners and learners with high needs do not achieve their target grades.

Typically, learners are very satisfied with their experience. Those that attend take full advantage of opportunities that help them to enrich their knowledge beyond the basics of their course. For example, T level adult nursing learners enjoy additional reading and discussion that enhance their understanding of wider issues in healthcare. Healthcare students have external training in CPR from professional clinicians. They are confident that they would be able to assist in an emergency. Opportunities like this help students gain confidence. They feel a keen sense of belonging to their departments, the college and their wider community.

Staff provide a good balance of additional activities that keep learners fit, broaden their skills and help them to make friends and have fun. All young learners, including those with high needs, take part in extra-curricular activities and there is a buzz around the building each Wednesday afternoon as they join in with activities like band practice, maths academy and volleyball.

Learners benefit hugely from the dedicated staff. Teachers and learning support specialists make sure that they support adult and young learners with additional needs well. For example, in lessons they use graduated task sheets, large font and colour to highlight key

words for learners with reading difficulties so that they can access work independently. Learning support staff work thoughtfully to give targeted support to individual learners, but are also available to all learners that need extra help. Over time, learners become more independent and need less support, but they feel happy that help is there should they need it.

Adult learners enjoy coming into college each week for their English or mathematics evening classes. They say that the new skills and knowledge that they develop give them greater confidence. For those looking for employment or entry to higher education, their new English language and mathematical skills give them a greater range of choices. A large minority of adult learners do not attend classes frequently enough. Staff help adult learners to re-engage, but leaders recognise that there is more to do to improve turnout to adult classes.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should further strengthen teaching on vocational and academic level 3 courses so that students gain grades that reflect expected progress against their starting points.
  - Leaders should continue to implement measures that improve the proportion of learners that remain on their courses.
  - Leaders should make sure that staff apply policies and procedures consistently well so that attendance improves across all provision types.
  - Leaders should continue their work to reduce the achievement gap between learners with high needs and their peers.
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## About this inspection

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with governors, leaders, teachers, employers and other stakeholders, and learners during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following about the provider:

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College is a 16 to 19 academy in Southampton. It offers courses to young learners aged 16 to 19, learners with high needs and adult learners. All courses are taught in person on one site.

The majority of 16- to 19-year-old learners take level 3 A-level and applied general courses and a large minority take level 2 vocational programmes. The college offers T level courses in business, childcare, digital production and adult nursing. Adult learners take evening classes in English and/or mathematics GCSE. The college offers adult Access to Higher Education courses in midwifery and health and social care. There were no learners on these programmes during the inspection.

The college has 771 learners. The vast majority of learners are taking 16 to 19 study programmes. There are 20 adult learners on GCSE English and mathematics evening courses. There are 102 learners who are in receipt of high needs funding and who take academic or vocational study programmes. Approximately 550 16- to 18-year-old learners take mathematics and/or English GCSE alongside their main academic or vocational course.

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College does not have any subcontractors.

Executive Principal: Andy Grant

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### **Lead inspector:**

Claudia Harrison, His Majesty's Inspector

### **Team inspectors:**

Kay Hedges, Ofsted Inspector

Mike Finn, His Majesty's Inspector

Hannah Hancock, Ofsted Inspector

## **Facts and figures used on inspection**

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 14 January 2026

## **Number of learners**

### **Total learners**

**771**

### **Education programmes for young people**

**649**

### **Adult learning programmes**

## Provision for learners with high needs

102

## Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

### Adult learning programmes

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	55	87	Below
2022/23	77	87	Close to average

## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

**The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)** inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects

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