

Brooklands College

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Alan Marsh HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the college

1. Brooklands is a large general further education (GFE) college, with its main site situated close to the town of Weybridge in Surrey. Since its merger with the former Spelthorne Sixth Form College in 2007, it now has a further site based in Ashford, five miles away.
2. In addition to provision within the main Weybridge and Ashford sites, the college also offers part-time courses – primarily in basic skills and supported learning – at 18 other venues, including community centres and workplaces in the Elmbridge, Runnymede, Surrey Heath and Spelthorne areas. The college is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for public services and for core engineering, and is one of three partners in a CoVE in aeronautical engineering.
3. Although the surrounding residential areas of the main sites are very different – with Weybridge being one of the most affluent in the country – there are in both localities significant numbers of young people and adults with low educational attainment. Other than Heathrow airport, there are few large employers nearby and most employment is in the service sectors. The local unemployment rate is relatively low. The number of school leavers attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is above the national average. The local educational environment is competitive, with many sixth forms in state schools and a significant number of children attending private schools.
4. Of the student population, some 33% are from ethnic heritages other than White British, compared with a proportion of around 15% in the three most immediate boroughs.
5. Provision is offered in 14 of the 15 subject areas, although numbers in several areas are small. The largest subject areas are engineering and manufacturing technologies; art, media and publishing; health, public services and care; and preparation for life and work. The inspection graded provision in child development, engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, creative arts and design, and preparation for life and work.
6. The college provides training on behalf of the following:
 - CfBT (Skills for Life)
 - Sigta Ltd.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled students in 2008/09
Provision for young students: 14 to 16	487 part-time students
Further education (16 to 18)	2,204 full-time and 477 part-time students
Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment (E2E)	824 full-time and 102 part-time students
Provision for adult students: Further education (aged 19 and over)	89 full-time and 1,741 part-time students
Provision for employers: Train to Gain (T2G) Apprenticeships	272 trainees 101 apprentices
Informal adult learning:	1,005 students

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for students	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Subject areas	Grade
Child development	2
Engineering	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Hospitality and catering	3
Creative arts and design	3
Preparation for life and work	3

Overall effectiveness

7. Brooklands is a satisfactory college with the capacity to improve. It could and should be better. Students enjoy what they do and make the progress expected of them on their courses, but not enough of them pass their assessments to gain their main qualifications. Adult students and younger students aged 14 to 16 tend to do better than students aged 16 to 18. Most students, however, develop good personal and social skills and improve their prospects of employment. Inspectors looked at six subject areas in depth, and found that those studying engineering and child development are taught particularly effectively and do especially well. In the other four subject areas and elsewhere in the college, they are taught competently and they receive good advice, guidance, and specialist support when needed.

8. Keeping their students safe, respecting their different backgrounds and needs, and involving them in how the college is run are all high priorities for the Principal, staff and governors. They fulfil these commitments well. Many students contributed to the inspection, as they contribute to the life of the college and the wider community, in thoughtful, generous and insightful ways. The college is justly proud of them. Brooklands is a dynamic part of the area it serves, and has built very good partnerships with local schools, employers and other agencies.
9. The college must, however, improve how well it knows itself. It has failed to recognise some of its weaknesses that have prevented students from achieving better recently, and inspectors had to identify what it should already have realised itself and done more about. The college has ambitious and very well-founded plans for the future which should enable it to serve its community better. A large building project to further these ambitions has, however, been put in jeopardy by a financial crisis brought about almost entirely by the inept management of others.

Main findings

- Outcomes are satisfactory for students overall. They are good for school students aged 14 to 16, who pass their qualifications in high numbers. However, they are unsatisfactory for students aged 16 to 18, not enough of whom succeed in what they came to college primarily to do. Success rates for this age group are particularly low at General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level.
- The achievement of qualifications by apprentices and trainees on the Train to Gain programme has improved considerably and is now satisfactory, although not enough of them complete their courses within the allotted time.
- Students make reasonable progress on their courses and on the whole reach the standards expected of them, bearing in mind the attainment levels at which they come in to the college.
- Students are well prepared by the college for the next stage of their education or for employment. Rates of progression between levels of courses and between the college and higher education are high, and students develop a good range of skills that contribute to their all-round prospects for later life.
- Students feel safe and secure. The college takes great care and trouble to ensure this. It is particularly watchful of those who are most vulnerable.
- Students make a significant contribution to the inclusive life of their college and of the wider community in which they live and work. They give of their opinions, time and energy in many ways. The college listens very well to what they have to say and involves them fully in decision making.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students' learning abilities and further needs are assessed effectively when they start their courses and subsequent support contributes well to their learning. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable

teachers use a good variety of stimulating activities in the best lessons so that students are actively involved and make rapid progress.

- Too much teaching, however, is uninspiring and allows students to remain passive. Many tasks are insufficiently challenging and do not stretch students enough. Teachers often do not focus well on the personal capacities or potential of students in a group, many of whom are not sure exactly what is expected of them as individuals.
- Vocational courses integrate work experience particularly well into learning, so that students usually increase their knowledge and skills in the context of the real working environment they are exploring.
- Literacy and numeracy are well promoted and supported and consequently students make good progress in their acquisition of these essential skills. Teachers, tutors and support assistants collaborate effectively to help students in lessons. Trainees on Train to Gain programmes are supported in particularly flexible ways that fit in with the demands of their paid work.
- The college makes particularly good use of its partnerships with employers, schools and voluntary organisations to enhance development opportunities for students. Its very good relations with community organisations are used well to widen participation in education and training.
- The use of information and learning technologies by teachers is inconsistent. Many use them well to diversify and enliven how they teach, and they ensure that the college's online learning resource has up-to-date, relevant material from their subject area which enables students to work productively away from the classroom. Not enough teachers, however, use these resources with sufficient confidence or frequency.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has been through a period of considerable turbulence and this has been handled well. The sense of a new, purposeful learning community is strong. Many aspects of distributed leadership, such as the engagement of students and employers and the clearer lines of management accountability, are showing tangible benefit.
- The Principal, senior staff and governors have a bright and ambitious vision for the future, but critical improvements in students' success rates are not yet evident. At course and school level, curricular management is still too variable in its oversight of performance, use of data, and level of expectation.
- Self-assessment and quality assurance, including the use of performance data, have been weak since the merger in 2007, with the result that the college has not really been able to look at itself as incisively or accurately as it ought to have done. Inspection exposed weaknesses of which the college itself seemed largely unaware.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Analyse carefully at all levels why too many students aged 16 to 18 fail to gain their main qualification, and on the basis of this intelligence take uncompromising action to improve the educational outcomes of present and

future students. Pay particular attention to why some GCE A-level success rates are so poor and take urgent steps to improve them.

- Ensure that the self-assessment and quality improvement processes from course level up to overall college level are scrupulous, incisive and accurate. Make proper use of data, including those on students' progress, to compare performance at Brooklands with similar colleges elsewhere.
- Spread the better teaching practices in lessons more systematically and effectively to show weaker teachers how they might improve. Support and train these teachers in more active teaching strategies so that all students become more directly involved in what they say and do in lessons.
- Use the more effective leadership and management practices in stronger subject areas of the college to support and guide those responsible for less successful areas so that they are able to make the changes necessary to improve results for their students.
- Develop further the capacity for information and learning technologies to enliven teaching and to facilitate independent learning by students when they are not in the classroom, studio or workshop. Share the best practices to be found in this approach with those who currently lack the confidence or competence to use them.

Summary of the views of students as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- helpful and supportive tutors who treat them with respect
- the fact that staff listen to them and change things
- a good variety of enrichment opportunities for those on the Weybridge site
- good resources and specialist equipment on many courses
- receiving clear feedback and explanations about their work, enabling them to develop independent learning skills
- being treated as an adult
- the pleasant, welcoming and safe environment for studying
- being prepared well for going to work.

What students would like to see improved:

- the amount of information they are given about college plans for the future and what college managers do
- the number of drop-in workshops available to them to help them improve their chances of exam success
- the speed of the computer network, and both their access to and the content of the virtual learning environment
- the updating of some materials and equipment in a few areas, and some course groups having to work in cramped classrooms

- the range and accessibility of enrichment activities on the Ashford site
- the timetabling of their working day
- the provision of better outside lighting and some catering facilities in the evenings
- the shortage of personal lockers.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the realistic and well-equipped working environment in which motor vehicle engineering is taught
- the college's sensitivity and responsiveness to the particular needs of minority ethnic students, those who speak English as an additional language, and those with literacy or other learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the way the college establishes and maintains a very positive working environment
- effective collaboration with most assessors.

What employers would like to see improved:

- students' grasp of basic business economics and the commercial environment in which employers operate
- the frequency of their contact with tutors
- the fundamental practical skills that child development and health care students bring to their work placements at the beginning of their courses.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

10. The college is a very different institution from the one that was inspected in 2006. Staffing has been entirely restructured and the curriculum substantially revised. Both sets of changes have improved the college. Most managers are new to their roles and now pursue ambitious targets vigorously. Students enjoy being at Brooklands and thrive in many ways. Quality assurance and self-assessment have been weak since the merger but are improving. Of the subject areas inspected in depth, two were good and none unsatisfactory. Success rates overall, however, are too low. Regrettably, the large rebuilding programme which was at the core of the college's shared vision for its future may not materialise.

Outcomes for students

Grade 3

11. Success rates have been volatile over the last three years across different ages and subject areas, and in many cases have declined to below national averages. For students aged 16 to 18, success rates overall have been around national averages for three years since 2005/06, although at intermediate level they have remained relatively high. College data for 2008/09, however, show that success rates fell at all three levels of study last year. At advanced level, representing the largest group of students aged 16 to 18, the highest projected success rate, at 69%, is some six percentage points below the latest known national average. The GCE A-level success rate is unacceptably low.
12. The majority of adult students follow foundation-level courses, mainly in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), or are in work-based learning. Success rates on all long courses for adults were low in 2006/07 and 2007/08. From 2008/09 the college enrolled most of these students onto shorter, more intensive courses in order to improve their motivation and chances of success. This decision has been fruitful, and the college projects that success rates for these students in 2008/09 will be much better than in 2007/08.
13. There are no consistent variations in attainment between different minority ethnic groups. For example, in 2007/08, Asian Pakistanis aged 16 to 18 achieved very well at foundation and advanced levels, but the majority of Asian adults achieved well below other groups in that year. Adult women do better than men at foundation and intermediate levels, but worse at advanced level. The college is consistently successful in enabling students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities to attain at least as well as other students.
14. Completion rates for those on apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes have improved from a low level and are now satisfactory; in engineering they are good. However, too many apprentices remain on their programmes longer than originally planned.

15. Around 500 students aged 14 to 16 from local schools undertake work-related courses at the college each year. They achieve well: success rates have been high for the last three years.
16. Students make satisfactory progress from their varied starting points. Those studying public services, applied science, and manufacturing and vehicle maintenance make particularly good progress. The college has developed its own system to predict and review students' progress, but in 2007/08 this system underestimated how much progress some students should have made.
17. Students are attracted to the college by its good reputation and they enjoy their courses. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. A large majority of students gain good employability skills and confidence at work, and in some cases are able to operate at a higher level than might be expected. The number of students who progress from one course level in the college to another is good. Rates of progression to higher education or to employment are also good.
18. Students feel safe and well protected. They develop and practise good habits of safety and personal protection, including on the internet. They are confident that their tutors would respond appropriately if they raised a concern. A few students would like to feel more secure when activities at college finish late at night.
19. Students play a prominent, influential part in how their college is run, and have had a say in aspects such as induction, enrichment activities and the arrangements of social spaces. They make a significant contribution to the inclusive life of the college community. There are also numerous examples of external community projects and activities in which students have participated enthusiastically, such as charity fundraising, fashion events and motor sport projects.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

20. Teachers display good subject knowledge and expertise from which students increasingly benefit. The college has improved initial assessment and identifies the particular needs of students effectively. Most teachers use this information well to plan lessons that are varied and stimulating. Their enthusiasm ensures that all students participate and their learning is frequently checked. In such lessons, students progress rapidly in their tasks and answer questions confidently. Some vocational course teachers make particularly good use of the work-related experiences of students to illustrate what they are teaching in ways that bring learning vividly to life. However, too few lessons blend all the above features. Tasks and activities often fail to extend students. Despite their planning, too many teachers take insufficient account in practice of students' different needs. Students are often not sure exactly what is expected of them.
21. Support for literacy and numeracy is good. Teachers and support tutors work closely and effectively in lessons to develop confidence and competence.

Trainees on Train to Gain programmes are particularly flexibly supported to suit their employers' requirements.

22. Technology is used effectively in many lessons to promote learning, notably in motor vehicle engineering, which has excellent resources. Most students can gain access to lesson materials and assignments, and monitor their progress, online. A number of teachers lack the expertise to exploit the potential benefits of information technology and it is underused in a few subject areas. The college computer network is slow.
23. Assessment is carefully planned to enable students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Students understand their progress and receive regular and constructive feedback on their work to help them to improve. Employers and parents are well informed about students' progress. Targets set for many of them, however, are not specific enough to secure incremental progress.
24. The college has responded well to local and national priorities and needs in the planning of its curriculum. For example, it provides a range of short courses aimed at improving or updating participants' employability skills. Helping adults improve their literacy, numeracy and computing skills has been given high priority. The college currently offers a satisfactory range of courses and qualifications in almost all subject areas, although its provision of GCE A-level courses is limited and declining. In some subject areas, such as hospitality and catering and hairdressing and beauty therapy, the curriculum on offer is incomplete. The college provides an imaginatively-designed programme for pre-foundation students (the Bridge programme) to introduce young people to vocational education, and offers clear progression routes from foundation courses to courses at advanced level and in higher education. Students are offered a broad range of enrichment activities aimed at developing their sporting, creative or personal skills, although participation in these activities is low.
25. The college has built dynamic, mutually beneficial partnerships with a wide range of schools, voluntary organisations and local employers from the public and private sectors. One illustrative benefit to students that derives directly from these is the work placement opportunities that many enjoy. Another is the successful establishment of new 14-19 Diplomas in some subjects. Partners also make generous contributions to vocational lessons and tutorials in the form of external speakers and hosted visits and exhibitions. Partnerships with community organisations are used well to promote social inclusion and widen participation in learning.
26. The college makes good provision of additional care and individual support for those students who have identified special needs. It helps students cope with the challenges posed by their courses and a complex social environment. The college provides good written information for staff on students' particular learning and behavioural needs and clear guidance on how best they may be supported. In some subject areas, students have a well-planned programme of educational development which is reviewed regularly to indicate the progress

they are making in overcoming barriers to full participation, but these plans are not yet used with all students receiving additional support. The college provides satisfactory information, advice and guidance to all students both when they join and leave the college. Tutorials are effective in facilitating good communications and extending students' development beyond the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

27. The Principal, governors and senior leaders have a bright vision for the college's future which they are pursuing with passion and diligence. The merger of Brooklands and Spelthorne colleges in 2007 brought with it significant management challenges as well as exciting opportunities, and the college is still in the throes of responding to these. The entire staffing structure has been revised and most managers are in new jobs. An ethos of open communication, distributed leadership and well-defined accountability is evolving from a previously more stratified hierarchy that did not encourage these characteristics, although senior leaders are still perceived as too remote by some. Expectations are high and the educational needs of the local communities are central to the college's ambitions, but these aspirations are not yet matched by improvements in students' success rates, which remain low. Other outcomes for students, however, are satisfactory or good, as are aspects of the quality of provision. The proposed development of accommodation, which would have seen both sites of the college physically and technologically transformed, has been thwarted by grave financial mismanagement beyond the college's own culpability or control. This has precipitated a crisis which threatens the scope of the curriculum.
28. This accommodation development project has been a central preoccupation of the governors and some senior leaders since the merger. Governors' extensive skills and experience have been exploited very well in many respects, but they too share some responsibility for students' low attainment because they have not persistently interrogated information on students' achievement. They now exercise their subject link roles in ways that enable them to monitor performance more effectively. Their statutory duties are amply fulfilled.
29. The college pays high regard to the safeguarding of all its students, with particular attention being given to those who might be most at risk, including those in care. All relevant policies and procedures are current and appropriate. Information and advice designed to ensure that students are protected from all hazards and harm wherever they happen to be are a priority for everyone. Without becoming excessively risk-averse, the college has created a culture in which students learn over time to manage their own risk and take responsibility for their own safety. Staff have been trained to the necessary levels of understanding, alertness and intervention in order to provide a very secure network for safeguarding throughout the college. There are very good links with external agencies who share responsibility for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The record of accidents and incidents, actual or potential, is scrupulous and shows a reducing occurrence.

30. In the context of its local demography, the college recruits a high number of students who are not of White British heritage, many of whom do not speak English as their first language and have low confidence and prior educational attainment. Collectively, they make satisfactory progress on their courses and attain as well as White British students. Separately, there are a number of achievement gaps but these are in constant flux and no distinctive pattern is discernible. The one consistent trend is that students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve slightly better than mainstream students. Statutory equality policies and procedures meet current requirements and are regularly reviewed. Little progress has been made in analysing data about the specific experiences of minority ethnic students in order to try and identify particular trends by subject or pedagogic approach, to further inform the refinement of improvement strategies.
31. Cultural and social diversity are respected and celebrated. Initiative is shown in trying to correct imbalances, such as the proportion of female students in engineering, by trying to ensure that no distinctive cultural or gender bias becomes anywhere too dominant. The ethnic heritage of staff, and of the governing body, reflects the local population, but not that of the student body, many of whom live outside the most proximate boroughs. The promotion of equality and diversity through the subject curricula is well planned in some areas, but its actual implementation is too infrequent and incidental in most.
32. The college involves most students and employers very well in its efforts to improve provision and outcomes. All courses have a student representative who is trained in how best to play this role. The student council, union and governors are all actively engaged in dialogue with the college on a wide range of topics, and many instances are cited by students of actions taken by the college because of what they have collectively said through various fora. During the inspection, students were linked with every member of the inspection team, and gave valuable insights into what it is like to attend the college as a student. The number of employers with whom the college works is not large, but their assessment of the college's contribution to their business is very positive.
33. The main reason why students have had low success rates in recent years is that self-assessment and some quality assurance processes have failed to identify accurately those subjects and groups that were at risk of failing. Consequently, incisive action has too often not been taken to arrest declining standards of work or keep students on courses until their successful completion. Senior leaders have suspected this to be a problem, but have been too dilatory or preoccupied to intervene. In some cases, they have lacked essential information because performance data have been viewed myopically or used selectively, and the precise nature or scale of an emerging problem has been masked. One of the benefits of the new staffing structure is that key managers are now clear-sighted and their accountability exposed, and they have already acted decisively following initial analysis of data from 2008/09. The capacity of junior managers to make intelligent use of data and thereby compose sharply-focused and insightful reviews is still variable, but they are now being trained to

do this properly. Most inspectors saw perceptive and accurate reviews of last year's work, but a few were not so reassured. One aspect of quality assurance that is increasingly effective is the scrupulous monitoring of teaching and learning. Clear and realistic actions to bring about improved teaching, from skilful mentoring to enhanced pedagogy, stem readily from astute lesson observations. As a consequence, residual unsatisfactory practice is being reduced and dull, mechanical learning reinvigorated. Teaching has demonstrably improved in subject areas where the college has applied specific, well-focused interventions in a sustained way.

34. Financial management is satisfactory, although as a result of circumstances beyond its control the college now faces huge challenges. Staff enjoy good professional training opportunities and these are well exploited. Resources are mostly well managed and, despite low success rates, the satisfactory level of overall outcomes for students means that the college represents satisfactory value for money.

Subject areas

Child Development

Grade 2

Context

35. Currently there are 366 students attending courses in childcare, learning and development from foundation to advanced level, of whom 137 are working towards the advanced diploma in childcare and education. The large majority of students are aged 16 to 18. Some 54 adult students are working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVO) in childcare, learning and development, and 62 are pursuing this qualification through the Train to Gain programme.

Key findings

- Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are satisfactory, but the proportion who gain high grades has been well above the national average for the last three years. Overall success rates on Train to Gain programmes are good, and many trainees complete their qualification well within the allotted time.
- Many first-year students complete the first unit of their qualification as part of their induction, thus providing early feedback on their work and learning needs. Second-year students demonstrate a good understanding of the principles that underpin childcare, such as valuing individual growth and behaviour. Trainees on Train to Gain programmes make good progress and demonstrate growing confidence in their work with children.
- In 2007/08 the number of students who completed the advanced diploma in childcare and education fell from a very high level to just below the previous year's national average. The college has analysed that this was due to changes in the course structure and the particular demands it makes of students, for which they were not fully prepared.
- Students feel very safe and value the measures that the college takes to maintain a safe and secure environment. The college has good arrangements to ensure students' personal safety while on work placement.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned to meet the range of students' needs. Teachers bring lessons vividly to life and often relate the content to students' own experiences in their work placements. This ensures that students quickly develop the ability to relate what they have learnt to practical situations.
- Occasionally, activities do not sufficiently challenge the more able students. Not all students can see how some of their interactive learning tasks, which they enjoy, relate to the theory of childcare.
- Teachers make good use of initial assessments and students' own evaluations of lessons to plan and teach in ways that take full account of how students best learn. Students develop good insights into how they themselves learn most effectively and this further enhances their understanding of how younger

children learn. Teachers provide sensitive support for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

- Assessors provide very good support for Train to Gain trainees. Very frequent and well-planned assessment visits build confidence. Trainees understand clearly how to improve their work because observations and professional discussions are detailed and well recorded, and feedback is sharply focused. Trainees, employers and managers are regularly updated on trainees' progress.
- The subject area has built good partnerships that contribute significantly to the vocational relevance of students' experience and the professional contemporaneity of the curriculum. Employers and teachers plan together well to develop students' skills on work placement. Close work with a range of local agencies, including Sure Start centres, ensures that the college meets the needs of this sector in the local community.
- The needs of students and employers are well met. Childcare courses are available across all ability levels. The requirements of local childcare providers are catered for effectively, and they value the college's very good pre-programme guidance. Work placements start early for all students aged 16 to 18, ensuring that they quickly understand what childcare is about by practising it directly.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers are proactive and responded quickly to problems arising from revisions to qualifications made by the awarding body in 2008/09. The subject area is strongly led and a good sense of teamwork prevails. Internal communications are good.
- Self-assessment is effective in identifying areas for improvement. Actions taken by the teams have improved teaching and learning. Improvements include staff training, mentoring and, in some cases, the effective management of poor performance. During the inspection, students were keen to tell inspectors how some of their lessons had become more engaging and dynamic.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Continue to monitor the arrangements for the teaching of the revised childcare and education qualifications and ensure that staff teams have the training to meet the skills and knowledge requirements set by the awarding body.
- Improve retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 by ensuring that they receive more effective pre-course guidance and that they understand the academic rigour of the revised qualifications in childcare and education.
- Challenge and stretch the more able students further in every lesson in order to maximise their potential.
- Make sure that all students understand the continuous links in childcare between theory and practice, and learn to draw those links for themselves so that their own practice is always informed by their understanding of theory.

Engineering

Grade 2

Context

36. Currently 656 students attend a range of engineering courses from entry level to advanced level. Three pathways are available, providing courses in motor vehicle engineering, aerospace engineering and manufacturing technologies. In addition to the 256 full-time students aged 16 to 18, there are a further 120 school students aged 14 to 16 taking GCSE engineering and the new Diploma, and 80 apprentices.

Key findings

- Success rates for students on national diploma courses in aerospace and motor vehicle engineering are good. Overall success rates for apprentices on motor vehicle engineering have improved and are good, although not enough complete their frameworks in the allotted time. Teachers now monitor students' timekeeping and attendance rigorously and improved attendance has contributed to the good success rates.
- The quality and standard of students' work are good. Students develop good vocational and social skills in the workplace with many of them working on tasks and projects well above the expected level at their stage of training. In one company, students are given positions of significant responsibility working in production teams manufacturing luxury sports cars.
- Students feel very safe in college and on work placements. Teaching staff ensure that all learners use safe working practices in practical lessons and in the workplace.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use an interesting variety of methods to stimulate and engage students. Learning technologies are used very effectively to promote and support learning, including interactive whiteboards and computer-based training packages.
- Students have a good grasp of what they need to do to improve because progress reviews are effective in providing them with prompt and constructive feedback on their work.
- Teaching resources for practical work in motor vehicle studies are outstanding. The workshop facilities are particularly well equipped for motor sports engineering. One classroom has a computer-based training simulator that enables students to develop their knowledge of robotics and electronic system design. However, some classroom accommodation is cramped and inhibits learning.
- The college computer network is often very slow. Students complain that they regularly have to wait too long and it prevents them from making best use of their study time.
- The college has developed outstanding partnerships with schools, local employers and the industries at large. These have improved the industrial relevance of learning and progression opportunities for students at all levels,

creating coherent pathways from school directly into employment via good training.

- Leadership and management are good. Staff use their extensive knowledge of the sector to ensure that courses are at a standard that meets industry requirements, especially in aerospace and motor sport. Managers have a clear focus on improving the quality of the provision and use the quality improvement plan successfully to implement changes.
- Regular visits by governors to the department and their attendance at recruitment, promotional and training events have had a very positive impact on students and staff, creating a common sense of purpose in the college's focus on both students and employers.
- Staff have a strong commitment to issues of environmental sustainability. The subject area is working closely with an energy efficiency partner in introducing imaginative and innovative arrangements to minimise the consumption of energy and the waste of materials from the workshops.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of apprentices who complete their training frameworks within the allotted time by reviewing more regularly and systematically their progress towards this target.
- Ensure that class groups are accommodated in rooms that match their size and learning needs.
- Upgrade the computer network so that it runs faster.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 3

Context

37. Currently 242 students attend a range of full- and part-time courses from foundation to intermediate level in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies. There are 10 apprentices. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Achievement is satisfactory. Success rates are high for beauty therapy students aged 16 to 18 on foundation- and intermediate-level courses, but only satisfactory for those taking hairdressing. Success rates are high for adult students on the intermediate hairdressing course. However, for students taking the combined hairdressing and beauty therapy course at foundation level, success rates are only satisfactory.
- Students make good progress in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. The standard of students' practical skills at foundation level is particularly good. These students also develop confident personal, social and employability skills, such as teamworking, that are valued in the industry.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory but present inconsistencies of practice. In too many lessons not enough is expected of what students might do or contribute and they become too passive, even disengaged. However, in a small minority of more effective lessons students are fully involved in active learning and readily become more confident and independent in what they think and do.
- Students benefit from good tutorials which enhance the college's overall tutorial programme to provide particular information and guidance on matters such as sexual health and study skills. Students appreciate this level of support and it improves their well-being.
- Students are unable to progress to advanced-level courses at the college, and although staff have helped those who wanted to do so to find suitable provision elsewhere this remains a shortcoming of the curriculum.
- Students' literacy and numeracy needs are well supported. Those identified as requiring particular personal support in this area are assisted by a vocational-specific teacher who is appropriately qualified in basic skills. Consequently, the reading and writing of these students have improved, which in turn has led to their better progress on their vocational courses.
- The college has developed good partnership links with the local hairdressing and beauty therapy industry in order to provide all full-time students with work experience. There are plans for students to reciprocate a recent visit to the college by vocational students from overseas, thereby extending their experience internationally.

- Opportunities for course enrichment on the Ashford site, where hairdressing and beauty therapy students are based, are limited but satisfactory. Too few students take advantage of what is available. The teaching team have developed their own subject-focused extension activities by taking students on various trips to hairdressing and beauty therapy competitions, exhibitions and fairs.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are effective and meetings put an increasing emphasis on students' attendance and progress. Consequently, attendance rates have improved and are now among the highest in the college. Other data, however, are not used so effectively to improve core results.
- Equality and diversity are not explicitly promoted through lessons or course tutorials because teachers do not know how to do this within the context of the hairdressing and beauty therapy commercial sector.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching emulates the best pedagogic practice in the department and engages all students in active learning so that more of them succeed on full-time foundation and intermediate hairdressing courses and the foundation beauty therapy course.
- Improve students' chances of success by providing them with two distinct vocational pathways at intermediate level, rather than a combined course.
- Train and support all teachers in the interpretation and application of student performance data in order to inform improvement plans.
- Give staff a better understanding of what equality and diversity mean and how they might be explicitly promoted to students in the context of the hairdressing and beauty therapy industries.
- Introduce an advanced-level course in beauty therapy if market research and resources support such a move, and explore the same prospects for an advanced-level course in hairdressing.

Hospitality and catering

Grade 3

Context

38. Currently 170 adult students attend a range of courses in food preparation and cookery, including bakery and sugar craft, from foundation to advanced levels. Some 78 students aged 16 to 18 follow a similar range of courses.

Key findings

- Achievement is satisfactory. Success rates for intermediate-level NVQ food preparation and cooking have improved and are now satisfactory. However, although pass rates for intermediate-level NVQ food service, bar service and advanced NVQ food preparation and cooking are improving they are still low. Adults do not achieve as well as students aged 16 to 18, nor make comparable progress. Attendance and punctuality are good.
- The development of students' skills varies considerably according to the specific course and level they are undertaking: on a few courses skills are no more than satisfactory, but students following courses in sugar craft, patisserie and bakery demonstrate very high levels of professional skill.
- Students make good progress through their courses. Technical proficiency is developed early. Alongside this, professional behaviour and standards are promoted effectively through dress and conduct codes and the unrelenting reinforcement of health and safety and food hygiene practices.
- Students are well prepared for employment in the food preparation and bakery industries. Work experience is central to their courses and students are carefully matched to these commercial placements to maximise their learning and improve their chances of employment. Placement opportunities are broad and include prestigious hotels and clubs as well as smaller businesses. Many students secure jobs as a direct consequence of their placements.
- In the majority of lessons, teaching effectively builds technical skills to professional standards and makes good, regular links between theory and practice. Students' differing individual abilities and support needs are well planned for and usually responded to sensitively and effectively. In these lessons, steady progress is secured.
- In a minority of lessons, individual comprehension or practical competence is not adequately checked or corrected so students flounder. Their different individual learning needs are not adequately taken into account in the planning or execution of a lesson. A few teachers tolerate petty disruptions and distractions which accumulatively spoil a group's focus and concentration. In these lessons, progress is undermined.
- Teachers use their own skills, knowledge and expertise well, some outstandingly so, to inspire and enthuse students. In patisserie, sugar craft and bakery, teachers are exceptionally skilled practitioners and are able to coach students

for national competitions. Consequently, individual students acquire very finely honed skills and high expectations are set for the department as a whole.

- Information and learning technology is not used effectively to promote or support learning. Many staff lack the confidence and competence to integrate it into their teaching and opportunities are missed to use it for reinforcing learning. By not making better use of the college's online learning resource teachers fail to exploit an individualised, independent facility that might consolidate or extend what students do in lessons.
- The range and content of the curriculum on offer are insufficient to meet students' medium- and long-term personal and career aspirations. Students are no longer able to gain a qualification in front-of-house skills alongside their qualification in food preparation and this restricts their employment opportunities. The range of craft courses is limited. There is no provision for apprenticeships or Train to Gain programmes.
- Students receive good pastoral and specialist support and this contributes significantly to their achievement. Many students have profound and complex social and personal needs. They have great confidence in their tutors and the confidentiality and respect with which they are treated. External agencies and dedicated welfare support staff within the college are well used, and comprehensive records securely kept.
- Arrangements to monitor students' progress and analyse their attainment are weak. Teachers are not sufficiently aware of which students or courses are not doing as well as they should. The use of data by the subject team is haphazard and immature: they have little knowledge of how well their students attain against national comparators, neither do they know what progress to expect from students on the basis of their prior attainment.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teachers check learning more assiduously, attend to individual students' needs in both the planning and implementation of lessons, and maintain a disciplined learning environment at all times so that success rates improve further on all courses.
- Train and prepare teachers to make better use of information and learning technologies, both in order to bring more variety into lessons and so that students may work independently researching, revising, consolidating and extending their learning.
- Use data properly to analyse the measurable impact of teaching on learning and inform self-assessment and improvement planning.
- Amend the curriculum to better meet the employment needs and interests of students and the wider local and national skills needs of the industry as a whole.

Creative arts and design

Grade 3

Context

39. Currently 401 students attend a range of courses in art and design, graphics, photography, and fashion and clothing from foundation to advanced levels. Some 317 of these students are aged 16 to 18, and 67 are school students aged 14 to 16.

Key findings

- Success rates are good on almost all vocational courses. However, success rates on most AS- and A-level courses have declined over the last three years and are now low.
- Students develop a range of technical skills that enable them to produce work to a good standard. Their command of observational drawing, composition and use of various materials and tools grows steadily, as does their personal confidence to explore and express their perceptions and conceptions.
- Many students progress from foundation- or intermediate-level courses to advanced-level courses, and a high proportion of advanced-level vocational students progress to higher education: 80% did so in 2008/09.
- Students feel safe and secure. They are confident that staff would respond appropriately if they were to report any concerns. Health and safety is also strongly reinforced as and when necessary, for example within lessons in the darkroom in which photographic chemicals are used.
- Teaching is at its best when it develops self-evaluative and analytical skills. An independent work ethic is often promoted by the effective use of information and learning technologies which enable students to gain access to a wide range of visual stimuli to support their design ideas.
- Too many lessons, however, lack challenge, drive and high expectations. On these occasions, teachers fail to create a sufficiently dynamic learning environment and consequently students settle for mediocrity.
- Equipment and resources are often good with much industry-standard software and computing equipment available and accessible. The accommodation has been substantially improved since the last inspection. However, some classrooms are cramped and this restricts the activities students can undertake. For example, they are limited to small-scale work and unable to make full use of a variety of equipment.
- A minority of students have identified learning needs and these students do not receive the type or level of support that they require to help them succeed. The testing and diagnosis of conditions such as dyslexia are occasionally carried out but not followed up with appropriate support.
- The college makes good use of its strong partnerships with local schools and employers to provide clear pathways in the arts disciplines for students from age 14 upwards, and to offer interesting work experience opportunities to those

students who wish to further their appreciation of the arts in a working environment.

- Insufficient opportunities are created or taken to promote equality and diversity through lessons. Although teachers do plan project briefs that draw on a wide variety of cultural influences (for example, researching the iconography and social ramifications of Mexico's 'Day of the Dead' festival), there are too few explicit opportunities created to promote diversity and explore cultural contexts actively through focused research themes.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the self-assessment report and quality improvement plan do not clearly identify actions that would lead to improvement in key areas of the provision. Plans are not sufficiently well monitored to be able to judge their impact on students' achievement or progress.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the chances of success on AS- and A-level courses by ensuring that students enrolling on these courses are sufficiently well qualified and well informed to cope with the rigour of the course requirements.
- Enliven and sharpen teaching and learning to ensure that students are consistently and actively challenged. Ensure that action plans resulting from lesson observations clearly identify what teachers need to do to improve how students learn rather than concentrating on systems and teachers' activities.
- Ensure quality improvement plans that flow from the course reviews and self-assessment report identify key actions more explicitly, so that it is clearly stated what needs to be done and who is responsible for subsequent monitoring and evaluation.
- Embed the promotion of equality and diversity more imaginatively and fully in assignments and schemes of work to ensure that students develop greater awareness of a variety of cultural backgrounds, practices and influences.
- Ensure that class groups are accommodated in rooms that match their size and learning needs.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Context

40. Currently 494 adult students attend a range of part-time preparation for life and work courses from entry level to intermediate level. Some 117 are on literacy courses, 61 are on numeracy courses and 316 are studying ESOL. Courses are run in a variety of community settings as well as at the main college sites. There are 36 trainees on Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

- Achievement is satisfactory. Students make good progress, and also progress well between different course levels. In ESOL, students gain confidence in both listening and speaking skills, particularly those who had no previous experience of English. In numeracy, students who require a qualification for employment purposes gain confidence in performing calculations.
- Students are enthusiastic about their studies and can articulate the positive impact of what they learn on their economic and social well-being. They talk of their growing personal confidence and, particularly for ESOL students, their sense of belonging much more to the local society around them as a result of what they learn and can do.
- Success rates, however, are low on most of the accredited courses. Too few students passed their qualifications in 2007/08. College data for 2008/09 show that the decision to run most of these programmes as shorter, more intensive courses has improved students' motivation and acquisition of skills. As a result, success rates have improved and are around national averages.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lesson planning is detailed, with a variety of tasks well designed to stimulate and engage students effectively because they are pitched at the appropriate level of their learning. In vocationally-linked ESOL lessons, students acquire specific vocabulary to improve their performance at work. Teachers positively reinforce and consolidate what students learn.
- Volunteers are deployed effectively to support learning in class. Teachers plan their contribution to the lessons carefully, and learners appreciate their help.
- Managers place a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of the community. A range of partnerships are used effectively to attract hard-to-reach students, for example young mothers, army personnel, and those with mental health problems. Employers' needs have been met through specifically designed provision: for example, some ESOL provision has been tailor-made for migrant workers in a large bakery.
- A new management team has put strong emphasis on improving success rates and overall performance. Communication between team members is good. Data are largely used well by managers to improve performance, although as yet not all staff are as aware of course targets as they should be. The impact of these changes is only just beginning to become apparent in outcomes for students.

- An improved system of lesson observations is rigorous and incisive. It has substantially improved the proportion of good lessons that are taught. The lesson observation programme has identified specific areas for improvement in teaching, and relevant staff training has been provided to address them.
- Course reviews in 2007/08 were insufficiently rigorous, being more descriptive than analytical. Inadequate analysis was undertaken of college success rates compared with national averages. Over time, course teams have been insufficiently critical of the slow progress made by some learners. However, inspectors were satisfied that the new management team has successfully changed attitudes and outlook.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Students and teachers treat each other with respect, and students understand that any form of discrimination will be challenged. The department promotes both diversity and cultural harmony.

What does Brooklands College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor students' individual targets and progress rigorously in order to improve success rates for adults.
- Ensure that all staff embrace the notion of how sharply-focused performance targets contribute to improvement at course level and lead to higher success rates for students.
- Adopt a more self-critical approach to course review to include comparison of students' performance against national averages so that the college gains an accurate view of its comparative performance.

Information about the inspection

41. Five of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by one of the college's Assistant Principals, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection reports of both former colleges, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspections, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
42. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. They talked informally with a wide selection of students.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Brooklands College

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14–16	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled students					
Full-time students	3,113		3,024	89	
Part-time students	3,180	487	579	1,741	373
Overall effectiveness	3	2	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3	2	4	3	3
How well do students achieve and enjoy their learning?	4				
How well do students attain their learning goals?	4				
How well do students progress?	3				
How well do students improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do students feel?	3				
Are students able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?	3				
How well do students make a positive contribution to the community?	2				
Quality of provision	3	2	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for students?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support students receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	3	2	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?	3				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of students?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow achievement gaps?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for students?	4				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3				

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