

Alton College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130691

Name of lead inspector: Alex Falconer HMI

Last day of inspection: 2 October 2009

Type of provider: Sixth Form College

Address: Old Odiham Road
Alton, Hampshire
GU34 2LX

Telephone number: 01420 592 200

Information about the college

1. Alton College is a large sixth form college and is the only post-16 college in rural east Hampshire. The nearest further education colleges are between 10 and 20 miles away in Guildford, Basingstoke and Farnborough. There is considerable competition for post-16 places among the Hampshire colleges. The college provides a subsidised bus service for students travelling to the college across a largely rural setting.
2. Courses at all levels, both full- and part-time, are provided by the college in 11 of the 15 subject areas. The recruitment of full-time 16 to 18-year-old learners has continued to grow over the past few years and is now above 2000. Over 85% of these students are on Level 3 courses such as GCE A, AS level and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) programmes. Student numbers are highest in science and mathematics; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture and preparation for life and work. The college works closely with Treloar College to provide education and training for around 30 students who have a range of severe disabilities. A further 800 adult learners, mainly part-time on vocational courses, are recruited each year. The college has a Train to Gain contract for about 500 learners in the local community, including learners at army and RAF bases. In addition, some 170 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools attend the college on part-time vocational courses.
3. There are no maintained secondary schools with sixth form provision within 20 miles of the college. In 2008, 75% of pupils in east Hampshire achieved at least five A* to C grades at GCSE compared with 65% for England as a whole. In November 2008 3.6% of the 16–18 population were recorded as not in education, employment or training and Bordon and Whitehill wards are areas of some deprivation. Around 3% of young people and 9% of the adult students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is a higher proportion than in the local population.
4. The college mission is to provide high-quality education and training in an inclusive, supportive and challenging environment.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16	173 part-time learners
Further education (16 to18)	1958 full-time learners
Foundation learning	84 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	497 part-time learners 31 full-time equivalent learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	357 learners
Informal adult learning	529 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
------------------------------------	---------

Capacity to improve	Grade 1
---------------------	---------

	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	1

Subject areas	Grade
Science and mathematics	1
Visual arts and media	1
Social sciences	2
Business, administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

- Alton College is outstanding. College managers and governors demonstrate outstanding capacity to make improvements in outcomes for students and the quality of provision. Students' achievement of qualifications has improved and in 2009 was excellent. It is clear that the students feel safe at the college and make excellent progress. Many, including disabled students and those on maintenance grants, successfully progress to undergraduate study. Students also enjoy taking part in a wide range of cultural and sporting activities and achieve considerable successes. The college successfully promotes equality and diversity and has robust safeguarding procedures in place. Excellent progress has been made in addressing the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are good overall, but a minority of lessons do not always have sufficient challenge for all students. The accommodation, learning and specialist resources and access to information technology are outstanding. Students are very well supported and guided through their studies. The views of students, parents and partner organisations

are effectively sought and acted upon. The college actively collaborates with a wide range of partners to develop its provision and that of east Hampshire. Leadership and management of the college are very strong and systems to review and evaluate provision are well organised and effective. Development plans are sensible and lead to improvements. The college represents outstanding value for money.

Main findings

- Students thoroughly enjoy their studies and achieve outstanding outcomes. Pass rates are consistently above national averages for both academic and vocational programmes. Disabled students from Treloar College achieve high standards and enjoy studying at the college.
- Students' attainments are above that predicted by their previous results and disabled students make very good progress.
- The development of students' economic and social well-being is outstanding and students also show success in a variety of sporting and cultural contexts. A high proportion of students go on from Alton College to university.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons were graded good, some outstanding and a small number satisfactory. Students develop confidence and very good subject knowledge during their studies.
- However, a minority of lessons fail to challenge and fully develop the skills of all the students.
- Teachers and students work very well together to develop and maintain individual learning plans. Students understand the importance of realistic targets and value their learning plans.
- The advanced curriculum is very broad and offers a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications. The range of courses at intermediate and foundation level has increased since the last inspection.
- The college collaborates with an extensive range of partners, which contributes to improving outcomes for the students and the local community.
- Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. Students settle into college very quickly and appreciate the exceptional support of their tutors. Additional learning support needs are quickly identified and the support provided is highly effective.
- The college is outstandingly led and managed. Governors effectively review and monitor all aspects of the college performance.
- The college places a strong emphasis on students' health, safety and well-being. Students are clear about actions to take should they feel bullied or discriminated against. Vulnerable students are well protected.
- The college promotes equality and diversity very well. The individual needs of students are well met. However, college managers recognise that there is inconsistency in the promotion of equality and diversity at curriculum level. The

college listens carefully to students, parents and its partners. Opinions are actively sought and responded to promptly.

- The college is meticulous in evaluating its strengths and weaknesses and identifying areas for improvement. The self-assessment report is accurate and review at curriculum level is very effective in bringing about improvements.

What does Alton College need to do to improve further?

- To explore and develop approaches to teaching and learning that unlock students' maximum potential and ensure that they are fully challenged.
- To build on the college's commitment to equality and inclusion by identifying innovative ways of promoting cultural diversity through the taught curriculum.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the ease with which they are able to make the transition into college life, and the community ethos of the college
- good physical access for disabled students
- approachable teachers who provide detailed feedback on their work and progress, and the opportunity to review their progress through electronic individual learning plans (ILPs)
- the importance the college places on gathering and acting on students' views
- the wide range of additional activities, both of general interest and specifically related to their courses
- access through the college intranet to online learning resources and the information about health, welfare and finance
- the very high quality accommodation and resources
- the strong emphasis on and support for students applying to higher education.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the punctuality of buses
- prices in the college shop and refectory.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

6. The college continues to make outstanding progress in improving outcomes for students and in developing the quality of its provision. Students' successes in achieving qualifications have improved and are well above national averages. Teaching and learning have improved. Support for students has continued to be outstanding and recent changes have improved students' ownership of their targets and progress. Significant investment in resources has continued to ensure that students have very high-quality accommodation. The college has made very good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Additional learning support is effectively evaluated and pass rates on intermediate courses have improved. The college's self-assessment and quality assurance systems continue to bring about sharp evaluation of the provision and well-constructed development plans.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

7. Students thoroughly enjoy their studies at Alton College and achieve very high outcomes. Success and retention rates at all levels are high and have improved over three years. Pass rates for GCE A and AS programmes are well above sixth form college averages. High-grade passes (A and B grades) were well above national averages in 2009. Students' outcomes for vocational programmes at advanced and intermediate levels are also very good.
8. Progress of students on BTEC National courses is very good. Students on GCE A and AS courses make progress in line with that predicted from their prior attainment. Disabled students and those with maintenance grants make very good progress and successfully go on to higher education and further study. In addition, students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieved outstanding outcomes in 2009. Pupils from local secondary schools following vocational or extension studies also show high levels of achievement.
9. The development of students' economic and social well-being is outstanding. Over 80% of those taking GCE A level in 2009 progressed to higher education. Progression to further study or employment is equally good on vocational programmes and for those progressing within the college from foundation and intermediate courses. Attendance is very high and has been 95% for the past three years.
10. Students also succeed in a variety of cultural and sporting contexts. Notable recent successes include a gold medal paralympian, a place on the England under-19 cricket tour of South Africa and a range of highly successful musical attainments. The students say they feel safe in the college and safe working

practices were observed during the inspection week. Through a good variety of workshops and activities, the students are able to make informed choices about adopting healthy lifestyles. In addition, students successfully make positive contributions to the local community through fundraising for charities and other activities.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

11. Inspectors judge teaching and learning to be good. This judgement agrees with the college's view in their self-assessment report. Most lessons were graded as good, some outstanding, and a small number satisfactory. College managers have developed a cross-college learning model which is successfully being used to raise standards.
12. Lesson planning is effective and teachers set clear objectives that are successfully shared with students. In the best lessons, teachers and students together reflect on objectives achieved. Most teachers motivate and engage their students, and make appropriate demands according to ability. However, a significant minority of lessons fail to challenge and develop the skills of the more able students.
13. Standards of work are good overall and outstanding in some curriculum areas. Practical and performance work in performing arts and in art and design lessons are outstanding. Most students develop significantly increased levels of confidence and enhanced subject knowledge during their studies. Levels of enjoyment and engagement in classroom activities are high.
14. Teachers work particularly effectively with students to develop and maintain individual learning plans. These provide students with clearly recorded, meaningful targets which are updated regularly during individual tutorials. Initial and diagnostic assessments provide a reliable basis on which the college can provide specialist support for students who have specific learning difficulties. Good levels of staffing enable students to receive prompt and well-targeted support from specialist and other support personnel. Good links exist between tutorial target setting and initial assessment outcomes.
15. Learning resources are good and specialist resources are widely available for students who have physical and learning disabilities. Most teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance lessons. Specialist practical equipment and resources are generally good. In some areas, for instance media, photography, drama and dance, resources are outstanding.
16. The college has a well-developed and very well used virtual learning environment (VLE). Teachers place a wide range of good quality materials on the VLE, and students make good use of these.

17. The extent to which the provision meets the needs of students is outstanding. The advanced curriculum is very broad with a wide choice of AS and A levels and BTEC qualifications. The range of courses at intermediate and entry level has increased since the last inspection and continues to develop in line with the college's strong strategic vision for local 14–19 developments. The college is meeting the needs of employers in the local area well.
18. The college has an extensive range of partnerships with local schools, colleges and businesses. The college plays a significant role in consortia and partnership developments for education in east Hampshire. Partnerships are delivering clear outcomes for students and the community, such as widening participation, improving basic skills levels and broadening course choice. Disabled students from Treloar College enjoy studying at the college and achieve well. Gifted and talented students in schools are able to benefit from extension study. The college's students are very positive about transition to the college facilitated by the close collaboration of college and partner school staff. There is extensive provision for school pupils aged 14–16 who attend the college part-time.
19. The programme of additional activities to enhance students' development and progress is very broad and popular with students. Cross-college activities include Russian language and salsa dancing. Extended project work is very successful in preparing students for higher education. Course-specific activities, such as jazz improvisation for students taking A-level music are popular and some students have had unconditional offers from prestigious higher education providers.
20. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students settle into the college very quickly, and courses meet their expectations very well. Students appreciate the exceptional support of their personal tutors. Students and tutors manage electronic individual learning plans very well. Students place great value on them and the regular opportunity to discuss their progress with their tutors. Additional learning support needs are identified early and the support provided is both timely and highly effective. Those students receiving support achieve in line with their peers. The college now evaluates the effectiveness of learning support well, which was an area for development identified at the last inspection. Students highlight the value of online resources for health and welfare support, the quality of related workshops, and the ease with which they can make appointments online for face-to-face help with personal issues.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

21. Alton College is very well led and managed. Senior managers and governors continue to set a very clear strategic direction for the college. Management is effectively delegated and middle managers are well supported by coaching, mentoring and the college career development programme. Students' achievements have remained outstanding and the curriculum has been

broadened to include more vocational opportunities. In addition, the college now comprehensively monitors and evaluates additional learning support, a weakness identified in the previous inspection.

22. Governance is very strong. Governors monitor and review all aspects of the college performance, are well informed and highly effective in supporting and challenging the work of the principal and senior managers. Risk management is good. Significant risks are accurately identified and very well managed.
23. The college has a clear strategy for safeguarding and places a strong emphasis on students' health, safety and well-being. Policies and procedures are clear, well written and understood by staff. Staff training to identify the signs of abuse is effective. Safe working practices are continually promoted and there is excellent internet protection and security. Students are clear about actions to take should they feel they are bullied or discriminated against. The college carries out appropriate checks on staff through the Criminal Records Bureau and holds a single record of the results and relevant training. Vulnerable students are well protected.
24. The college arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are outstanding. Policies and procedures are implemented effectively and staff training is thorough. Managers carefully analyse performance data relating to individual groups of students. Active measures are taken to address any variation in attainment between groups of students. The individual needs of students are well met. For example, disabled students from Treloar College are well integrated and have access to a very good range of adaptive technologies and individual support. As a result, these students achieve at least as well as their peers. The promotion of equality and diversity throughout the curriculum is good. College managers recognise there is inconsistency in the promotion across subject areas and further development is needed. In some subjects, equality and diversity only occur when syllabus topics require them. In other subjects however, such as the social sciences, very good use is made of naturally occurring situations to promote and understand diversity and overcome discrimination.
25. The college continues to widen participation effectively, with a clearly identified community strategy aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups and extending the range of provision through partnership and collaboration. The college has very good arrangements for listening and responding to both students and parents. Managers actively seek feedback from staff, students, parents and partners. Staff respond promptly to students' concerns and students are highly satisfied with the college's response to their suggestions and comments. Students are highly satisfied with the learning and support they receive and they feel well represented in decision making.
26. The college's quality assurance procedures are meticulous and very effective in evaluating and improving provision. Curriculum team self-assessments and students' reviews are effectively informed by comprehensive data on all aspects of performance. Quality procedures are clear and well understood by all staff.

The self- assessment report demonstrates a high level of accuracy and self-assessment at team level is very effective in bringing about improvements. There is a good focus on learning and an appropriate level of detail to support judgements. Staff development is especially well organised and carefully linked to college targets.

27. Financial management is strong and plans for expansion are realistic and carefully planned. The college provides outstanding value for money. Significant investment in resources has continued to ensure that students have high-quality learning experiences. It is with regret that inspectors report the abandonment of building on the new engineering block due to circumstances beyond the control of the college. Resources to support learning are good overall and outstanding in media and photography. The availability and high specification of all information learning technology (ILT) facilities within the college greatly supports the learning experience of all students. Recent middle management training, sound financial planning, and rigorous controls and mechanisms continue to ensure the financial stability and growth of the college.

Subject areas

Science and mathematics

Grade 1

Context

28. Currently there are 1696 enrolments in science and mathematics with the majority on GCE AS and A level. There are 308 enrolments in biology, 230 in chemistry and 192 in physics and electronics. There are 751 enrolments across a wide range of mathematics options including 160 on GCSE mathematics. Most are 16–18-year-old full-time students. However, 42 adult students also take GCSE mathematics.

Key findings

- Students' achievements of qualifications are consistently high across all subjects and compare very well with national averages. High-grade pass rates for most courses are also above national averages. Most notably, A-level biology had 72% high grades and AS further mathematics had 84% in 2009.
- In GCSE mathematics, however, the A* to C pass rate has declined over the past three years and is now at the national average. The pass rate for A-level electronics has also declined.
- Students work diligently and safely and make good progress. They make very good use of the college VLE to support their studies. Most students take part actively in class discussions and develop sound analytical and critical thinking skills together with appropriate use of technical language. Predicting and hypothesising are well developed in some lessons.
- The college learning model provides a useful template for teachers to plan lessons to accommodate different learning styles. This has been effective in addressing dips in success rates in 2007/08 and has focused teachers' attention on activities to engage students.
- In most lessons teachers use an effective blend of activities and directed questions, together with discussions and skill checks to monitor and assess students' knowledge and understanding.
- However, in a few lessons teachers use a limited range of strategies to check learning and understanding. On some occasions the students were passive or did not have enough work to keep them occupied.
- There is a comprehensive range of advanced subjects that provide students with access to an appropriate range of options to enable progression to higher education. Additionally, National Diploma and International Baccalaureate are also offered.
- Curriculum enrichment is good and many students complete extended projects to improve their research skills. For example, a small group of physics students

have excellent opportunities to work with a scientist in residence from the aeronautics industry and to be involved in real commercial research work.

- Students benefit from a study environment that encourages learning and has high expectations of success. Staff are friendly, helpful and make themselves freely available in additional sessions.
- Very effective use is made of one-to-one tutorials and the electronic ILPs. Tutors know their students well and work particularly effectively to encourage them to develop clear unambiguous targets and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- There are high-quality resources and workspaces. Science laboratories are spacious, well-equipped and provide a professional working environment. Open access workspaces are conveniently situated near the laboratories and are well resourced with sufficient desk space and computer access.
- Teachers use information and data well to monitor performance of courses and effectively evaluate the impact of changes made to course structure and to teaching methods.
- Communications within subject teams are good and staff, including new teachers, support each other well. However, information sharing between subject areas is less well developed and good practices, particularly in teaching and learning strategies, are less well shared.
- Leadership and management in science and mathematics are very good. Professional development is good and clearly focuses on providing staff with relevant support and training. Self-assessment and quality assurance are strong and evaluative.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Understand and improve the declining A* to C pass rates in GCSE mathematics and A-level electronics.
- Ensure that lessons have sufficient content, pace and challenge and that teachers use an appropriate range of strategies to check knowledge and understanding.
- Further develop and extend the sharing of good teaching and learning practices across the range of subjects to ensure students have a consistency of experience and expectations.

Visual arts and media

Grade 1

Context

29. Currently there are 960 enrolments on visual arts and media courses. There is a wide range of advanced vocational and academic courses including art and design, media, photography, textiles, film studies and access to higher education. Currently media has 185 students, photography 263, film 54 and there are over 700 students on visual arts programmes.

Key findings

- Retention and pass rates are outstanding. In 2009, for example, A-level art textiles, media studies, BTEC Diploma in Foundation Studies and BTEC ND art and design all had very high pass rates. Most specialisms have a good percentage of high grades. In 2009 70% of A-level art and design candidates gained A or B grades.
- The standard of students' work is very high. They produce creative and experimental work in sketchbooks and finished pieces. Initial research is detailed and presented well, and final outcomes are displayed professionally to inspire students and raise ambitions about their work. Information technology is used well to enhance learning, such as in presentations.
- Students are confident and articulate. They are highly motivated and contribute well to class discussions. They have good levels of reflective and analytical vocabulary and use technical language and specialist terms effectively. Progression to higher education is good and some students go on to prestigious universities. Students feel safe while studying and comment on the atmosphere of mutual respect in the college.
- Students communicate very well with their teachers and can submit work via email. The VLE also has helpful study guides and resources.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects and share this passion with students. Teachers have good relationships with their students and are sensitive to their needs. Well organised schemes of work sequentially build on skills and there is detailed tracking of students' progress. However, in a few classes, some activities are not sufficiently challenging to stretch the more able students. Extension activities are not always included in course planning.
- Assessment practices are well organised. Verbal feedback is good, with detailed and constructive comments about how to improve. Written feedback is extensive and provides valuable advice. In a few cases, feedback to students is too general and does not specify a range of actions to improve work.

- Courses offered are mostly at advanced level and include vocational programmes as well as GCE A levels. Local school pupils can access well-organised part-time vocational programmes. There is a wide range of enrichment activities for full-time students.
- Care, guidance and support for students are very good. Tutors offer highly effective personal support, both pastoral and academic.
- Leadership and management are very good. Managers are responsive and supportive. Staff feel valued and informed. Lines of communication are clear and there is good team working. There is a strong ethos for constant improvement and a clear strategic vision. Self-assessment and review are accurate and evaluative.
- Specialist accommodation and resources are excellent. Good technical support is available. IT resources are very good with easy access to computers and colour printing. Photography has extensive facilities with three studios. New media production facilities include a television studio and editing facilities.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all learning activities in lessons fully engage the students and provide sufficient challenge.

Social sciences

Grade 2

Context

30. Social sciences currently have 723 enrolments, all on advanced courses. GCE AS and A-level psychology have 385 enrolments. In addition 153 students are studying geography, 116 sociology and 58 government and politics. Over a dozen adults are enrolled on an access to higher education programme for social sciences.

Key findings

- Achievements are good for 16 to 18-year-old students and for adults on access to higher education courses. Achievement rates for qualifications have been at or above the national average in most courses for the past three years. High-grade achievement has been particularly good in GCE AS and A-level geography and psychology.
- Students' progress and achievement are at or above that predicted from their GCSE results. Progress is particularly good in AS psychology and improving in sociology and government and politics. Progression rates from AS to A level are good across the subjects inspected.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use a good variety of strategies to engage and inspire students and lessons are carefully designed to extend students' knowledge and understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, too little attention is paid to the individual needs of students, with, for example, insufficient challenge for the more able students.
- Teachers make good use of technology in classes, especially electronic whiteboards and the internet. Students successfully use electronic media outside lessons, helped by dedicated IT provision in well-equipped subject-specific work areas close to classrooms.
- Although theory teaching is very good there is insufficient emphasis given to the acquisition of course-specific study skills. For example, the different essay requirements for some subjects confuse some students.
- The college learning model is used well in lesson planning, ensuring a good range of appropriate activities. However, most plans prioritise the needs of the curriculum over the needs of the individual. Activities are designed to be carried out by all students in the same way at the same time and the full range of learning needs are not always met.

- Marking and assessment are good. Work is marked accurately and promptly across the subject area and helps students improve. However, there are variations in the effectiveness of feedback given by different teachers.
- There is a good variety of qualifications at Level 3. Provision is further augmented by a wide variety of enrichment programmes, both in the subject area and across the college.
- Students are well supported in class and there is good access to college-wide learning support. Students are effusive in their appreciation of the extra help and support given by teachers outside teaching hours.
- The subject area is managed very well at all levels. Demanding expectations and targets are clear and realistic and monitoring is continuous and consistent. These have resulted in high levels of accountability and accurate self-evaluation by all staff and have continued to improve standards across the area.
- Equality and diversity are well managed and promoted. In an access to higher education sociology lesson, students from a variety of backgrounds were able to express their own cultural attitudes to deepen the understanding of other group members. Curriculum managers recognise that there is still work to be done to close the gap in achievement between male students and that of females. Disabled students are well supported and fully integrated into classes.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Identify more precisely students' individual strengths and weaknesses relative to the skills' demands of specific courses.
- Ensure all lesson and course planning includes relevant differentiated activities tailored to the needs of individual students.
- Develop greater consistency and clarity in written feedback in order to help students improve the quality of their work.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

31. The subject area has 792 students' aged 16 to 18 enrolled on full-time programmes. These include First and National Diplomas in business, GCE AS and A-level in accounting, business studies, economics and law, as well as economics on the International Baccalaureate. In addition, there are 66 adult students on part-time courses in accounting and bookkeeping and 11 students following national vocational qualifications (NVQs) as part of Train to Gain.

Key findings

- Students' attainments are high. They are consistently outstanding on GCE A level and are good on BTEC First and National Diplomas. Retention is good. However, pass rates have declined on GCE AS business studies to below the national average.
- Students' progress and achievements are at or above the levels predicted from their GCSE results. Progress is very good on First Diploma and law courses, but has been weak on GCE A-level economics.
- Standards of students' work are good and progression to higher education is strong. Students show good recall of content previously covered and work collaboratively in groups. They enjoy their studies. Attendance is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use current examples well in lessons. They explain concepts clearly and use a good mix of individual and group activities which are productive. Most lessons have clear challenge and high expectations of students, often stimulating students into identifying issues and deriving principles. Teachers use ILT well to present information and build up explanations.
- In a few lessons teachers do not sufficiently challenge students. Direct questions are not used sufficiently to involve all students and to check their learning. Teachers sometimes accept weak answers from students without further discussion and follow-up.
- Curriculum enrichment is satisfactory. It is very strong in law where links with, for example, the magistracy, the Crown Court, the Probation Service and Guildford College of Law are used very productively. On BTEC courses, work experience is used well to link with assignments. However, in other subjects there are few trips, visiting speakers or links with local businesses to enrich the curriculum.
- Support for individual students is highly effective. Students and tutors use electronic individual learning plans very productively to set realistic targets and

action plans. Students are taking increasing responsibility for identifying actions that will help them improve.

- Leadership and management are good. The law department is very well led, with good external links enriching the curriculum and regular team meetings to share practice. In 2008/9 there was improvement in performance across the whole subject area. In particular, significant improvements were made in pass rates and value-added on GCE AS law and economics. Teamwork is strong, with productive sharing of learning resources among staff.
- Managers acted decisively to bring about improvement in economics. Improved performance is apparent with the new staff team.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, but did not identify all key areas for improvement.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Continue to inject more challenge into teaching by developing teachers' capacity to monitor and assess students' knowledge and skills in lessons.
- Plan more varied activities to better meet the needs of students of differing abilities.
- Develop more links with local businesses to enrich the curriculum.

Information about the inspection

32. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires that learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Alton College

Learning types: 14–16: part-time vocational courses; 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses;

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 learners					
Full-time learners	2042		2042		
Part-time learners	1556	173		1026	357
Overall effectiveness	1	1	1		
Capacity to improve	1				
Outcomes for learners	1	1	1		
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1				
How safe do learners feel?	1				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1				
Quality of provision	1	1	1		
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1				
Leadership and management	1	1	1		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009