

Portsmouth College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130706

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Information about the provider

1. Portsmouth College is a sixth form college located on a single site on the eastern edge of Portsea Island. The college was established in 1984 to serve the general education needs of learners aged 16 to 19. Almost equal numbers of adults and under 19s attend the college. A high proportion (40%) of the 1,205 full-time learners are on courses below advanced level. Most of the 1,152 part-time learners are adults, many on literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses in the college and at off-site provision in the city centre. The college was last inspected in 2006, when it received good grades for all aspects. No subject areas were graded in that inspection.
2. Average educational attainment amongst Portsmouth residents is low. The percentage of Year 11 learners gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE in 2009 was 58.5, showing a steady improvement on previous years, but well below the Hampshire and England averages. Approximately one in four of the working population in Portsmouth has poor numeracy and literacy skills and 14.4% of the workforce has no qualifications. compared with 11.8% for the South East.
3. Portsmouth's secondary schools do not have sixth forms. Two further education (FE) colleges are within city limits and four other colleges including two sixth form colleges are within travelling distance.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - The Priory School AS critical thinking
 - Milton Cross School Health and social care
 - City Girls' School Work skills and photography.
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
 - The Beneficial Foundation Specialist provision for disabled adults.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	20 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	900 full-time learners 25 part-time learners
Foundation Learning Tier	76 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	194 full-time learners 1,106 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	71 learners
Informal adult learning Adult safeguarded learning	444 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	
Science and mathematics	3
Art, design and media	2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	2

Overall effectiveness

6. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Students make very good progress relative to their starting points, developing good skills and social responsibility. Success rates are rising, but they are still below national averages for sixth form colleges, particularly at AS level. New arrangements to monitor attendance and progress are having a marked impact on retention rates, which are high. Teaching is stimulating, challenging and enjoyable. The curriculum is flexible and inclusive, and personal support for all students is good. Partnership working is exceptionally broad, open and effective in raising standards in the city and the region. Leadership and governance are very strong and management is good. The college safeguards its learners well and actively promotes equality and diversity. The self-assessment process is accurate and leads to improvement. However, the college does not always use information and data analysis sufficiently to monitor progress and plan improvements.

Main findings

- Students make very good progress relative to their starting points, particularly on AS courses and BTEC National Diplomas. Many A2 courses have high pass rates. Three quarters of A2 students go on to university. Measures to increase retention and attendance have had a very good impact. In-year retention is high across all age groups.
- Students develop good employability skills, particularly in art and design and in ESOL, and are encouraged to take an active role in the local community through widespread volunteering. However, historical success rates on many courses have been low, although most have risen steadily and are approaching the national average.
- The college has high aspirations for its learners and encourages them to keep trying when they fail to achieve high grades in GCSE mathematics. A* to C pass rates are particularly low. Similarly, whilst general studies AS prepared learners well for A2 examinations, the low pass rate depressed overall success rates significantly in 2008/09.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are carefully planned to stimulate and challenge students. Students enjoy their lessons, making good progress. They produce work of a high standard which is carefully and promptly marked. Students have a mature rapport with staff. However, some lesson plans record an insufficient range of assessment strategies to confirm learning.
- Teaching observation practice is good. All staff are observed at least once a year and senior staff periodically 'drop in' on lessons to monitor the quality of teaching. Observers are well trained and validate their judgements by peer observation in other colleges. Written feedback is constructive and staff provide prompt support when a lesson is judged inadequate.
- The curriculum is broad, flexible and inclusive, welcoming all ages and abilities on site and elsewhere. The wide range includes schemes for high achievers and flexible alternative education for school pupils and young offenders. Restructuring the college year has improved progress. An early start and shorter breaks give more time and focus for learners unused to academic study.
- Partnership work is exceptionally broad and effective in raising standards in the city and the region. Staff collaborate very openly in local 14 to 19 consortia. Courses delivered to school pupils raised their points scores. Fruitful shadowing arrangements are building capacity both in the college and in local schools. Regional and international partnerships are highly productive at all levels.
- Individual support for all students, including adults, is widely promoted and very good. The college works effectively with external agencies to meet specialist needs. Transition arrangements for learners with disabilities are very thorough, supporting good inclusion. Most current students who have experienced this have clear progression aims to employment or higher education.
- The principal provides inspirational leadership, successfully promoting the college's strong and inclusive vision. Management is good. Communication at all levels is open and clear. Targets for staff are realistic and reviewed regularly.

Governance is strong, challenging and highly committed. Corporation members use their expertise very well to influence the college's strategic direction.

- Safeguarding procedures are thorough and comprehensive, meeting government requirements effectively. Training for all staff is appropriate to their role. Protection arrangements for students and visiting school pupils are thorough and well understood. Students find the college to be a safe environment. Instances of bullying are very rare. Prompt action is taken when issues arise.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Special events celebrate a range of cultures. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds have higher success rates than their White British peers. Successful work with the Beneficial Foundation supports learners with disabilities to lead productive lives. Productive partnerships through Sure Start provide training for young parents in deprived wards.
- Some aspects of data analysis and impact assessment are under-developed. Analysis of student performance by student type has only recently commenced and is not yet embedded. The college has made little progress on assessing the impact of its equality policies. Self-assessment is accurate but some curriculum areas have insufficiently precise action plans and progress reviews.

What does Portsmouth College need to do to improve further?

- Maintain successful strategies to improve student attendance and retention.
- Ensure that students are equipped to achieve their challenging targets with improved specialist support and guidance to develop their capacity to succeed on the courses they choose.
- Make better use of data and information to analyse performance and promote improvement.
- Improve the precision and focus of self-assessment and action planning to enable improvements to be monitored more closely in some curriculum areas.
- Develop better identification and recording of assessment strategies in lesson plans, sharing good practice to ensure that all learners' needs are met.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the very friendly atmosphere
- the good teaching which makes learning enjoyable
- the way staff respect them, listen to their views and act on them
- entertaining things to do, for instance, music at lunch time
- the college's inclusiveness and encouragement to learn about different cultures
- the very good advice and support they receive
- learning English so that they can fully participate in society (ESOL students)

- learning practical skills such as gardening and cooking (Beneficial Foundation).

What learners would like to see improved:

- more money spent to improve the facilities and buildings
- more interactive learning technology in ESOL classes
- more social areas and more seating in the canteen at busy times
- smaller classes on some Access courses.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the regular communication they have with the college
- the very proactive stance the college takes
- the convenience of training delivered to employees on site
- enjoyable learning for people who did not have a good experience at school
- flexible and responsive provision that meets local needs
- the way it involves their staff in college training events
- the college's willingness to work with all types and ages of people
- the added value to their business of skills that employees develop.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more money for the college to expand what it does
- better links with the college for learners at the Beneficial Foundation involved in a social enterprise project.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. The college is in a good position to build on and sustain the significant improvements in performance evident in 2010. Measures introduced in the last two years give a very firm base for further progress. Individual learner progress is monitored very closely, with prompt and effective intervention to keep learners on track. Progress monitoring against quality improvement plans through monthly academic boards is much tighter, promoting a culture of quality improvement. Teaching and learning remain good. The new strategic plan is clearly founded to meet local needs and is based on extensive consultation with partners. The learner involvement strategy is highly productive. Governors monitor developments in the college rigorously. Self-assessment is broadly accurate.
8. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing most areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection. Retention on part-time courses for adults shows steady improvement. For 16- to 18-year-olds it declined up to 2008/09, but robust monitoring introduced in the current year has raised it significantly. Pass rates on level 2 courses also show steady improvement. However, key skills performance, whilst rising, remains poor and the college needs to refine further the use of assessment in planning teaching and learning.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall. Learners achieve much better than predicted from their prior attainment. The standard of learners' work is good. Pass rates on more than half of A2 courses were 100% in 2008/09. Progression to university is high at 76%. Three quarters of these are the first member of their family to access higher education. Success rates for adults on literacy and numeracy courses are high, both in community provision and on Train to Gain programmes. However, whilst overall success rates are rising steadily at every level, they remain below averages for sixth form colleges.
10. Retention rates were low at foundation and intermediate level in 2008/09. However, highly effective action has raised attendance and retention rates significantly in the current year. For 16- to 18-year-olds at intermediate, retention has risen by eight percentage points to 93%.
11. The college has high aspirations for its learners and encourages them to keep trying when they fail to achieve high grades in GCSE mathematics. A* to C pass rates are particularly low. In 2008/09 the college enrolled advanced level students on AS general studies to give them practice in taking academic examinations. However, the low pass rate depressed overall success rates by 10 percentage points but nearly all have been retained into their second year.

The proportion starting AS courses who complete A2 in their second year has risen from 76% in 2007 to 2009 to 86% in 2008 to 2010 and in-year retention is 95.7%.

12. Learners enjoy their courses and have very good opportunities to display their work. Learners develop good skills and many, particularly adults, gain employment as a result, or greatly improve the efficiency of their work. A lively programme of enrichment in 2009/10 included a particularly successful hustings event with local parliamentary candidates. Learners feel safe and are confident that threatening situations will be dealt with quickly. They contribute strongly to their community, for instance by running sports days for local schools, providing art for hospitals and charity fundraising events. A large proportion of full-time students carry out voluntary work.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. Teaching and learning are good. The quality of teaching is monitored by a robust lesson observation programme. Lessons are carefully planned with clear aims. Students find most lessons challenging, stimulating and enjoyable. Teachers make very effective use of a variety of activities to motivate and interest them. Students make good progress, producing work of a high standard. For example, media students demonstrate good analytical skills and ESOL students quickly grasp conversational English. In-class literacy and numeracy support is integrated into courses at foundation and intermediate level and all learners, including those on Train to Gain programmes, have access to individual support if a need is identified. Assessment is regular and appropriate. Assessors visit Train to Gain learners every week to ensure that they are making good progress. Teachers in college mark work promptly and provide suitable feedback to help students to improve. Teachers carefully monitor student learning during lessons. However, some rely too much on questioning techniques. Lesson plans do not always record a sufficient variety of assessment strategies to confirm student learning.
14. The college has a very flexible and inclusive curriculum that welcomes students of all ages and abilities. It promotes its inclusive vision strongly with a very comprehensive approach to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. The on-site curriculum is broad, encompassing alternative education, mainstream provision and an eclectic mix of adult leisure courses. Local voluntary organisations, businesses and schools cite clear benefits to their work from courses delivered on their own premises. Recent action to restructure the college year has greatly improved retention. Studies start a week early and holiday breaks are shorter, giving more teaching time, better reinforcement and maintained impetus for learners unused to academic study.
15. Partnership working is outstanding, exceptionally broad and actively promoting social inclusion. The college is a key player in Portsmouth's civic strategy and highly proactive in supporting the needs of the community. Collaboration with schools is open and very effective. A productive reciprocal shadowing arrangement with potential school headteachers has introduced a very

successful system to track college students' progress, whilst building leadership capacity in schools. The college leads several regional partnerships with other colleges, raising standards across the area, for instance through peer lesson observation schemes. It is very open to making flexible arrangements to accommodate, support and motivate vulnerable young people, for instance those at risk of unemployment. The partnership with the Beneficial Foundation has enabled people with disabilities to develop skills for life. Community work with Sure Start offers childcare training to people in disadvantaged areas who could not otherwise access education. Strong links to the university benefit students and build their aspirations. External advice from national organisations has been used well, for instance in improving retention and attendance on courses for adults. A number of high profile international partnerships benefit college students and learners abroad.

16. Care, guidance and support are very good. Students can access a wide range of support both in college and through external agencies. Staff in support roles are well qualified. Initial advice and guidance inform students well about the most suitable programmes. Tutorial programmes are well planned. Progress monitoring at regular reviews has been enhanced by new on-line learning plans and a rigorous risk management system. Good careers advice helps students to progress towards their chosen vocation. Able and talented students receive excellent individual support, guidance and specialist mentoring in preparation for entry to university. Transitional arrangements are carefully planned and very effective in meeting the needs of students with complex needs joining the college. Specialist equipment is readily available to support specific needs, and well-planned staff development ensures that staff are able to help students using the equipment. However, analysis of the impact of support on learner success is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

17. The principal provides inspiring leadership that has a clear impact on improvement. The mission to widen educational participation for young people and adults of all abilities in Portsmouth has been vigorously pursued, yielding highly productive partnerships with local educational institutions. Success rates have been relatively low, although many students make significant progress in relation to their prior qualifications. Since 2008, senior managers and governors have put much more focus on improving success rates, and tighter strategies to achieve this. Challenging but realistic improvement targets are now set. College data show that retention has improved significantly in 2009/10 and attendance is rising sharply. The college forecasts significantly higher success rates based on students' progress in the year. Management reports are clear and timely, and are generally used appropriately by managers. Staff also make good use of on-line individual learning plans for data on student progress and attendance.
18. Communication within the college is good. Weekly briefings and whole college meetings are informative and encourage staff contributions. Regular staff and student bulletins are widely read. Staff appreciate the open door approach of senior managers, finding them approachable and accessible. Staff also have

good awareness of college values and espouse them strongly. The new strategic plan is well founded on the local economic and educational landscape. It has been subject to extensive consultation with local partners and a very active student council.

19. Governance is very strong. Corporation members use their expertise in the business and education sectors very well to influence the strategic direction of the college. They are determined and challenging, and show strong commitment to the mission of the college to serve the local community. They have placed more emphasis on reviewing performance of the college against success rate targets in recent years, pressing for improvement. The audit committee is particularly thorough in its risk management of activities. The views of student governors are actively sought and considered by the corporation. Despite the efforts of the search committee, there are currently no governors of minority ethnic background, in contrast to the high proportion in the student body.
20. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and comprehensive, effectively meeting government requirements for criminal record checks. All staff and governors have regular training on protecting children and vulnerable adults. Those with extra responsibilities or higher risk learners have appropriate specialist training. Staff are clear on procedures if they suspect abuse of a young person or vulnerable adult. Rigorous arrangements with partner schools safeguard students under 16 who study at the college. Students find the college to be a safe environment. Instances of bullying are very rare. Staff take prompt and effective action when issues arise. Safeguarding themes are included at induction and regularly reinforced in tutorial themes, for instance 'Keep Safe at Christmas' and 'Road Safety Week'. All students have access to help on welfare matters such as mental health issues, substance abuse, housing and teenage pregnancy. Suitable internet safety measures are in place, although the college is seeking to coordinate systems and policies in this field.
21. The college strongly promotes equality and diversity. The proportion of students of minority ethnic background is almost three times that in the local population. Students aged 16 to 18 of minority ethnic heritage have higher success rates than White British students. The college provides a good range of programmes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including mainstream and specialist work from the Beneficial Foundation, and has tripled their numbers since 2006. Productive partnerships with the voluntary sector, such as Sure Start and Women's Wisdom, enhance opportunities for disadvantaged adults and people with poor mental health. Successful projects support young people at risk of unemployment and young offenders. The college actively celebrates the wide range of cultures its students come from, for instance with Chinese New Year and Eid celebrations and a Christian week. A Bollywood production by drama students was extremely successful and classes in Latin dance are popular. Sports tutors have worked hard to attract more minority ethnic students, promoting cricket and providing all-female fitness sessions. Halal food is served in the cafeteria. However, some aspects of data analysis and impact assessment are under-developed. Analysis of student

performance by student type has only recently commenced and is not yet embedded. Also, the college has made little progress on assessing the impact of its equality policies. However, it has devised a purposeful action plan to address further improvement.

22. Engagement with learners and partners is outstanding. The strategy to underpin the very effective partnership arrangements is clearly formulated to expand learning opportunities for the Portsmouth community. The principal has been extremely proactive in forging productive links with schools, colleges and the local authority to open doors for new learners and widen opportunities for others. The learner engagement strategy is highly productive. The college concertedly seeks the views of students and considers them seriously in decision-making. The active student council is regularly consulted and the student voice is frequently heard at governors' meetings. Student opinion was influential in changes to the management of the cafeteria and shop, for example, and helped shape tutorial planning for 2010/11. The principal and deputy principal have regular meetings with a student focus group and course representatives. Views expressed are taken seriously in management decisions. Student surveys are also conducted and outcomes considered. The college has also made noteworthy developments in provision for local businesses.
23. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Success rates have remained low in recent years, despite the good progress made by many learners, given the often low level of their previous qualifications. However, the college has refocused its energies to put much more emphasis on quality improvement. Academic boards now meet monthly to review progress made by curriculum areas. Learner progress is monitored much more effectively. Retention and attendance are improving noticeably and the college anticipates significant improvements in success rates. Quality improvement plans and updates on progress are generally sound, but some lack precision and do not use available data sufficiently to review performance. College observers judge standards of teaching and learning accurately.
24. The college provides good value for money. Financial management is sound, and the college has reacted constructively to the cancellation of a rebuilding project due to national funding decisions. The college manages resources well with strong focus on sustainability. It plans further improvements to science facilities and an ambitious new artificial football pitch centre is near completion. Learning resources are generally good. Art, design and media are particularly well resourced, although there are insufficient information technology resources in ESOL. Rising trends in achievement, attendance and retention are the result of effective management intervention.

Subject areas

Science and mathematics

Grade 3

Context

25. There are 320 learners on mathematics and science courses. One third of the 150 GCSE mathematics students are adults, but most other courses have mainly full-time students aged 16 to 18. There are 41 students who study GCSE science. At A level, 169 students are on biology, chemistry, physics or applied science courses and 133 on mathematics, further mathematics or use of mathematics. There are 40 adults on science access courses.

Key findings

- AS and A-level examination pass rates are satisfactory. All A-level pass rates are satisfactory or better. One hundred percent of mathematics and physics students passed in 2009. Science students' work is good, benefiting from an improved focus on skills development and consolidating knowledge. Mathematics pass rates are increasing steadily. AS biology and chemistry pass rates are below average, but students achieve higher grades than expected from their prior attainment.
- GCSE mathematics A* to C pass rates are low for students aged 16 to 18. Most of those with a prior grade D do not achieve a grade C within a year. Success rates are very low for those with prior grades of E or less. Adult learners achieve in line with national averages.
- Retention is very high on A2 courses, at or near 100%. Retention at GCSE and AS level is around the national average for sixth form colleges. In-year college data indicate further improvements in retention. Progression to higher education is high.
- Attendance is low, but improving, on some courses. Average attendance, including authorised absence, in 2009/10 was 84% in mathematics and 86% in science. Managers have used close monitoring and intervention strategies to help students to improve their attendance. Attendance in GCSE mathematics has improved significantly this year, but on average these students still miss more than one lesson in five.
- Teaching is good. Staff plan lessons carefully to meet students' individual needs. They check learning well, often by using mini whiteboards, and engage students actively, for example through paired card-matching exercises. Tutors explain theory clearly and provide effective reinforcement activities. A calm and supportive ethos encourages learning. Mathematics assessment practice is satisfactory, but some science tutors provide insufficient written feedback.
- Resources are satisfactory. Students are issued with textbooks and the library has an adequate range of alternative texts and other books of interest. In-house materials are good, and learners make good use of commercially purchased online resources in mathematics and chemistry. Classrooms all have

projection technology and some have interactive whiteboards. Renovation and re-fit of science laboratories will be completed in September 2010.

- The curriculum is broad, flexible and inclusive. There are, in particular, a very wide number of options and modes of delivery for mathematics courses at intermediate level and below.
- The college works well with local schools to improve transition arrangements and offer informed choices for new students about courses. It arranges events such as taster days, science days and mathematics challenges to engage and interest students in their provision. Teacher placements help college staff to understand the school background of their learners.
- Support for students is good. New monitoring and intervention mechanisms are highly effective in supporting students identified at risk, and have contributed to improved retention, attendance and standards. High achievers have mentors to promote ambition and extend horizons. One mentor helped secure a paid gap-year internship in industry. Students appreciate the good careers service and value accessible and widely publicised support services and referral agencies.
- Leadership and management are good. Curriculum directors take effective action to improve standards. Their clear vision is very student centred. Academic boards regularly review quality improvement plans, using on-course performance data rigorously. In science, students' views have been integrated well into improvement planning processes, through 'say what you think' sheets for example, but the student voice is insufficiently used in mathematics.
- Self-assessment is honest and frank, but with an inflated judgment of achievement data in mathematics and insufficient analysis of value-added data. There has been insufficient urgency to improve outcomes in GCSE mathematics.
- The college actively promotes equality. Managers routinely analyse achievement data to identify any achievement gaps between gender or ethnic groups. Diversity is celebrated through classroom displays. Progression opportunities for girls in science are well promoted. Teachers mix up students in lessons so that they work with all of their peers, and there is a cooperative, supportive ethos in lessons.

What does Portsmouth College need to do to improve further?

- Construct and apply a consistent assessment policy across A-level science courses to ensure students are given regular feedback and know how to improve their work.
- Review target cohort and entry criteria for courses, particularly GCSE mathematics, with a view to further increasing success rates.
- Increase further the use, variety and frequency of the student voice in quality improvement processes in mathematics so that sources of dissatisfaction in the student experience can be identified and prioritised.
- Improve the rigour and depth of college analysis of achievement data in self-assessment to ensure that areas of under-achievement can be accurately identified and tackled.

Art, design and media

Grade 2

Context

26. The college offers mostly full-time courses in art, media and film at advanced level and GCSE level. Of the 363 students currently enrolled on art, media and film courses, 360 are aged 16 to 18 and three are adults. Leisure courses in art and design were not included in the inspection.

Key findings

- Success rates in film, textiles and on A2 and GCSE photography and AS graphics are outstanding. Success rates on most other courses are at, or are slightly below, the high national averages. However, GCSE art and design and AS digital film success rates are significantly below national averages. Students make better progress than would be expected from their prior attainment. Students who receive additional learning support achieve well.
- Students' practical work is of a high quality. Students on graphic design, media and digital film courses use industry-standard software with confidence and skill. Graphic design students show excellent appreciation and use of typography. Work is presented to a very high standard, supporting successful progression into higher education. Students' writing is analytical and reflective, developing strong personal interests in historical and current practices.
- Practical work is highly creative and realised very competently, in some cases at a professional standard. A good balance of both practical and theoretical tasks provides students with portfolios that display a deep and broad understanding of their subjects. Students are supported in their research through a well resourced library. Excellent physical resources and up-to-date technology support students in the production of their work.
- Students' achievements are celebrated and they value the encouragement they receive and the constant availability of teachers to provide advice and support.
- An outstanding educational visits programme, including overseas visits, raises students' aspirations and provides valuable material for their project work. The visits programme includes work-shadowing opportunities and enables learners to interview professional practitioners, giving them a valuable insight into careers in the art, design and media industries. Students participate regularly and successfully in local and national competitions and industry linked projects.
- Students make an outstanding contribution to the community; for example, they were very proactive in an art for hospitals scheme. Students also have excellent opportunities to exhibit practical work in local galleries and businesses.
- Students feel well cared for and safe. Behaviour is good and students work safely in workshops and studios. Well-planned accommodation allows staff to ensure that students are constantly supervised.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and well resourced. Teachers use examples of previous work well to give clear guidance on standards and presentation. They are skilled and knowledgeable about their

subject and in using new technology. Classrooms are well resourced. However, specific support needs are not identified consistently on lesson plans. Teachers do not sufficiently review or reflect on the success of lessons.

- Assessment feedback is thorough and detailed and is supported through the use of an online learning plan that is effective in bringing together all the information about students' performance on their courses, including attendance and subject performance.
- Projects are stimulating and encourage students to explore their subjects in detail. Courses include good representation of practitioners from different cultures.
- The college provides a good range of courses at advanced level. It is increasing the range at GCSE level to improve progression routes on to advanced-level courses and to increase the choice of career options available to its learners. For example, GCSE courses in film studies, graphics and textiles and short art courses have been introduced in addition to the advanced-level course.
- Partnerships in the community are highly effective. The college supports art and design attainment in some of its partner schools by providing access to art, design and media teaching expertise and to specialist resources, for example, delivering photography GCSE and supporting AS film studies. Productive and formal progression links exist with the local university and this supports positive student progression to higher education.
- Learners receive good specialist advice and guidance throughout their courses and additional support workshops are put in place to provide learners with extra examination support.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers set high standards and are dedicated to supporting learners to achieve their goals. Resources are maintained to an exemplary standard. Self-assessment is accurate. However, managers do not monitor and measure the impact of quality improvement actions sufficiently. Good teaching practice is shared but too informally. Learning points from lesson observations are used insufficiently to improve quality.

What does Portsmouth College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that areas for improvement in teaching are linked more effectively to quality improvement planning and personal professional development, and increase opportunities to share best practice to further improve teaching.
- Ensure that there are clear milestones and deadlines in quality improvement plans and that progress towards targets is regularly reviewed in team meetings to further support interventions and actions needed to raise standards.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Grade 2

Context

27. Provision includes Skills for Life (SfL), ESOL, Train to Gain and foundation studies with 65, 327, 8 and 110 on each programme respectively. 92% of ESOL learners and 97% of foundation learners study full time. Courses are located at the main college site, community locations, probation offices and schools. Foundation studies courses are accessible to learners who lack the confidence to attend college. The college has franchise arrangements to provide courses to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Key findings

- Success rates for learners aged over 19 are good and above national averages. College data indicate that rates are continuing to increase in the current year. Success rates on many pre-entry and entry literacy and numeracy courses are high but they are lower on level 1 literacy.
- Learners aged between 16 and 18 form a relatively small group but have low success rates. However, managers have taken successful targeted action to raise achievement and learners' current progress indicates a significant increase in success rates at all levels in 2009/10. Retention is good and has improved over three years for all age groups, with significant improvements for learners aged 16 to 18. Learners progress well from starting points. Attendance is satisfactory.
- Learners gain good skills to enable them to seek employment and take an active part in their communities. Most learners on ESOL courses progress rapidly between levels. Progression is also good from off-site to mainstream courses. Specialist provision for learners with disabilities provides a good range of progression routes to further learning.
- Learners feel safe. Health and well-being are promoted well across the college and community venues. Tutors make good reference to healthy living and safety in curriculum subjects. ESOL lessons are themed particularly well to healthy living such as focusing on sports club activities for a group of Kurdish men. Learners on independent living courses develop skills at the Beneficial Foundation by learning how to prepare healthy meals.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned to provide varied activities to stimulate learners. However, in adult literacy, learning activities are not tailored to the needs of widely varying ability levels. Tutors use open questioning well to confirm and assess learning. ESOL learners develop good skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing through active methods. Learners and tutors have good knowledge of progress and support needs, and individual learning plans are used well.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory, although not all learners have access to electronic initial and diagnostic assessment. Some initial assessment activities for literacy learners are not appropriate and learners struggle to complete tasks.

Most lessons do not plan for, or have access to, the use of interactive learning technology.

- The range of provision is good. The college has community provision and specialist courses to meet the needs of offenders and people with learning disabilities. Courses at entry to level 2 are provided at the main site and in the community, including work with pupils in five schools. ESOL provision includes wider development in citizenship, information technology and numeracy.
- The college has very good partnerships with schools and community organisations, improving accessibility to learners who are otherwise reluctant to attend college. The 'steps to success' provision and close links with the college help to overcome barriers to progression to further education. College partnerships are effective in improving progression to employment.
- Support for learners is good. Learning support workshops are used well to provide individual study skills support. A high proportion of learners access additional support. Advice and guidance are provided well before learners join, and frequently throughout courses. Learners access a good range of welfare services including dedicated dyslexia support and crèche facilities. Targeted progression days encourage ESOL learners to progress.
- Leadership and management are good. Sub-contracted provision is subject to strong monitoring and a focus on quality assurance. Management and staff teams have had a positive impact on improving retention, attendance and success rates. Data are used well to inform action planning at curriculum level, although the college does not routinely analyse progression data.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well in the college and through partnership working. Actions have improved and increased the participation of learners from diverse backgrounds. Learners' successes are actively and widely celebrated. Learners' understanding is actively reinforced in lessons. Data are analysed by appropriate groups. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Staff are appropriately trained. Health and safety responsibilities are clearly defined and implemented.

What does Portsmouth College need to do to improve further?

- Continue work to improve the success rates on literacy and numeracy qualifications by better planning of literacy classes and initial assessment.
- Ensure initial and diagnostic assessment materials meet the needs of literacy learners.
- Continue to implement the information technology strategy to ensure that tutors and learners have access to technology in lessons and in outreach venues.

Information about the inspection

28. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy 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 Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires 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)
Portsmouth 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 learners					
Full-time learners	1,205	44	940	225	
Part-time learners	1,152	7	121	990	34
Overall effectiveness	3		3	3	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	3		3	3	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
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?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
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?*	2				
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?	2				
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?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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