

Reigate College

Inspection report

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Contents

Background information.....	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8

Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Reigate College is a sixth form college located in south east Surrey, an area characterised by relative affluence and low unemployment, although there are pockets of relative deprivation within the college's wide catchment area. In line with its mission, the college focuses on providing courses for students aged 16 to 19, mainly at level 3, with some provision at level 2. A wide range of vocational courses is provided by a local general further education college. Nearly half of the college's students are recruited from five partner schools; the remainder are attracted from state and independent schools in the local area and from further afield, including significant numbers from the London Borough of Croydon.

2. In 2006/07, the college enrolled around 1,600 students; the vast majority of them were full-time, aged 16 to 18 and studying at advanced level. The number of adult students is very small. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds broadly reflects the composition of the dispersed catchment area of the college and there are slightly more female students than male students.
3. The college's mission is 'to provide quality education in a supportive community'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: Contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. Reigate College is an outstanding sixth form college. Students' achievement is outstanding. Success rates are very high and students make very good progress in comparison to their starting points. All groups of students achieve well, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, learning needs or prior attainment. Students benefit from a range of additional qualifications that enhance their personal and social development. The quality of provision in most sector subject areas is outstanding and in the remainder it is good. Teaching is of a high standard and students enjoy most of their lessons. The support given to students to ensure that they reach their potential is exemplary, as is the personal care and guidance they receive. The college is highly inclusive and has effectively adapted its curriculum in recent years to better meet the needs of its students. Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and governors have engendered a culture of high expectations and all aspects of the college's work are well managed. Quality assurance arrangements are highly effective in maintaining high standards and identifying the few aspects of the college's work that need improvement. Financial management is outstanding and this has contributed to the development of high quality accommodation and resources. The promotion of equal opportunity is good.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. Staff at all levels have a determination to ensure that every student fulfils their potential. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate, although judgements in subject reviews are on occasion not supported by sufficient evidence. Data are used particularly well to inform judgements, to monitor progress and to plan for improvements. Swift action is taken to tackle the small number of areas where students' performance is less impressive. Arrangements to improve further the quality of teaching and learning are secure. Leaders and managers at all levels set ambitious yet realistic targets to sustain and improve the quality of provision.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

6. The college has made outstanding progress in improving the quality of provision since the last inspection. Most aspects of the college's work are now outstanding. Success rates have improved significantly and are now well above the sixth form college national averages. The progress that students make has improved. Provision in key skills is now very good. Arrangements to share good practice throughout the college are now firmly embedded. Measures to improve further the quality of accommodation and resources have been highly effective.

Key strengths

- outstanding success rates
- excellent progress made by students
- very high standard of teaching and learning
- excellent approach to social and educational inclusion
- successful promotion of an ethos of high achievement and respect for all
- outstanding academic and pastoral support for students
- excellent accommodation and resources
- outstanding leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- students' achievement on a small number of courses
- the quality of evaluation of a few aspects of the college's work.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. Students' achievement and the progress they make are outstanding, as recognised by the college's self-assessment. Success rates on level 3 courses, which constitute the vast majority of the college's provision, are significantly above the high sixth form college national average. Nearly all students who embark on A-level and vocational courses at level 3 complete their programmes and are successful. The prior attainment in GCSE examinations of students on these courses is slightly below the average for sixth form colleges, and value-added analysis shows that students make outstanding progress in comparison with their starting points. The proportion of students achieving high grades on AS and A-level courses is broadly in line with the national average. As the college recognises, there is a small number of courses where students' achievement is less impressive. Students' performance on courses at level 2 is also outstanding, with a very high proportion of students on GCSE courses achieving grades A* to C. On all courses, there are no significant differences in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds or genders. Students with an identified learning need receive excellent support and achieve as well as others.
8. As part of their programme of study, most students take additional qualifications; for example, in personal money management and in developing employment skills. Success rates on these qualifications are very high and the courses make a significant contribution to students' personal and social development, as well as to their employability. Achievement in key skills qualifications is good. Students develop good independent study skills and the standard of their work is very good. Students' attendance at lessons is particularly high.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

9. The quality of provision is outstanding; a judgement in accord with the college's own self-assessment. Overall teaching and learning are outstandingly effective. This judgement arises not just from the quality of lessons but also from the quality and rigour of assessment and the monitoring of students' progress. The college's own lesson observation system shows that most lessons are good or better and a high proportion are outstanding. Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality of most lessons is good or better, but evidence shows that the college's judgement of the proportion of outstanding teaching is overstated.
10. In the most successful lessons teachers illustrate their teaching with many relevant examples. They are careful to make strong links between the practical and theoretical aspects of the subject. Where appropriate they make frequent reference to the requirements of the specification and the coursework assignments. In most lessons teachers set very clear objectives and plan a range of interesting activities to maintain students' interest and enthusiasm. Students work confidently and supportively together. However, in

- a small minority of lessons teaching is dull and students report that they spend long periods copying down notes or listening to the teacher.
11. Specialist teaching resources are very good and the college has a well developed virtual learning environment. Course teams and students make good use of this facility. Teachers have had extensive training in the use of information and learning technology and use technology confidently to support their teaching.
 12. Since the previous inspection the college has made considerable improvements to its assessment practice. A new assessment framework has been in place since September 2005. All students have a detailed electronic individual learning plan which is up-dated regularly. Teachers give students very good feedback on the quality of their assignments and tell them clearly how to improve their work. Students have very clear targets for the completion of their work, including for key skills assignments.
 13. The provision of support for students with additional learning needs is outstanding. Students' additional needs are identified swiftly and a package of support is arranged within their first two weeks at college. Classroom support assistants are used very effectively and are present in all classes on courses at level 2. All students who did not achieve at least a grade B in GCSE English are automatically enrolled on an essential skills course for improving literacy.
 14. The extent to which courses meet the needs and interests of students is outstanding. The college has taken effective steps to review and improve its curriculum to best meet its students' needs. Changes include an increased number of vocational options and more courses at level 2. The college has a very flexible approach to timetabling and ensures that students can pick and mix from a wide range of options. In some cases they study a vocational course alongside an A-level in the same subject to ensure they develop practical employability skills as well as academic knowledge. The college is working closely with another local further education college and six local schools to develop the new Diplomas for 14 to 19 year-olds.
 15. Students can choose from a good range of enrichment activities, although the college recognises in its self-assessment report that the take-up of activities is sometimes low. College managers are working closely with an active student union to improve the range of activities for 2008/09. A large number of students take advantage of work experience opportunities. The college strongly encourages this for all students including those on A-level programmes. The college has made very good improvements to the provision of key skills.
 16. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Although the college is oversubscribed, admissions procedures are fair and non-selective. Staff and students have created a culture characterised by an emphasis both on high achievement and on respect and tolerance for others. Students feel valued and safe. Support for students with specific learning disabilities or difficulties is excellent.

17. Guidance and support for students are outstanding. The college works particularly effectively with partner schools to enable a successful transition for its students from school to college. Pastoral support is excellent. The college makes use of a wide range of external organisations and agencies to provide additional support for specific needs; for example, Relate provides a counselling service in partnership with the college.
18. The tutorial programme is comprehensive and well structured. It includes excellent coverage of the Every Child Matters themes through a series of interesting activities during large group sessions. Other group tutorials are used effectively to provide training and additional qualifications in career planning and money management. The college was awarded Investors in Careers status in July 2006. Students enjoy their tutorials and see the relevance and importance of them. Tutors monitor students' progress thoroughly during individual tutorials. They identify any poor progress or attendance promptly and take effective action. Communication with parents is excellent. Progress reports are produced every six weeks and shared with both parents and students.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: Grade 2

19. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and his senior team provide a clear strategic vision that is underpinned by an unrelenting commitment to ensuring that all students achieve their potential. Students' achievement is outstanding. Governors oversee the work of the college effectively and show a detailed knowledge of the college's progress. Middle managers have become increasingly adept at identifying and tackling the few areas of the curriculum where students' achievement is not outstanding. All aspects of the students' experience at college are very well managed.
20. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and well focused. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Data are used effectively to produce a detailed analysis of students' progress and to identify areas for further improvement. Self-assessment at course and subject level is, on the whole, accurate and thorough. However, the system used for self-assessment results in some repetition of key judgements between subjects that are not always clearly supported by evidence; for example, many subjects identify the promotion of equality and diversity as a key strength, but do not articulate sufficient evidence to substantiate this view. Teachers regard the internal lesson observation system as highly effective in encouraging them to reflect on, and improve, their practice. Inspection evidence shows that the proportion of outstanding lessons is overstated because the grading system tends to over-emphasise the processes of teaching at the expense of learning outcomes and students' experiences.

21. Accommodation and resources are excellent. The college has invested wisely over a period of years to ensure that best use is made of the college estate. Students have excellent access to computing and other resources. Staff value highly the range of opportunities for them to benefit from training to improve their practice. Financial management is outstanding and the college provides excellent value for money.
22. College leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity. Data are analysed thoroughly to check that no groups of students are under-achieving. An ethos of respect and tolerance is successfully promoted through the tutorial programme and through cross-college activities, although evidence for the promotion of equality and diversity through the formal curriculum is less convincing. The college has responded positively to its legal obligations in respect of race, gender and disability equality, although there is scope for providing further training to both staff and governors to raise awareness of their responsibilities. Arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are fully in place.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	04/05	130	69	64	5	...	...	...	...
	05/06	113	75	71	4	12	100	57	43
	06/07	110	76	73	3	33	39	64	-25
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	130	69	63	6	...	...	...	...
	05/06	113	75	71	4	12	100	57	43
	06/07	110	76	72	4	33	39	64	-25

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	04/05	351	73	74	-1	...	...	...	...
	05/06	416	89	78	11	....	...	...	...
	06/07	317	90	82	8	...	...	...	...
GCSEs	04/05	195	85	78	7	...	...	...	...
	05/06	272	92	82	10	...	...	...	...
	06/07	193	90	83	7	...	...	...	...
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	76	92	75	17	...	...	...	...
	05/06	99	91	77	14	...	...	...	...
	06/07	71	86	78	8	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	80	25	62	-37	...	...	...	...
	05/06	45	73	70	3	...	...	...	...
	06/07	53	94	79	15	...	...	...	...

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	5278	86	82	4	10	90	60	30
	05/06	5364	89	84	5	...	...	...	...
	06/07	5168	91	85	6	23	96	69	27
A/A2 Levels	04/05	1470	93	92	1	5	100	76	24
	05/06	1496	96	93	3	...	...	...	...
	06/07	1864	97	93	4	9	100	80	20
AS Levels	04/05	2514	85	78	7	...	...	...	...
	05/06	2793	86	79	7	...	...	...	...
	06/07	2438	88	81	7	13	92	61	31
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	411	89	74	15	...	...	...	...
	05/06	191	99	77	22	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	883	78	72	6	...	...	...	...
	05/06	884	88	79	9	...	...	...	...
	06/07	866	90	80	10	...	...	...	...