

Strode's College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		10–13 March 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- at AS- and A-level, students make insufficient progress relative to their starting points and do not get high enough grades in their examinations
- the proportion of students that gain their AS-level qualification has declined in recent years, is now low and requires improvement
- teachers do not always extend or deepen students' knowledge and understanding in the exercises and activities they use or in the feedback they provide on assessments
- teaching and learning are not planned well enough to meet the needs of individual students and ensure they all make good progress
- managers have made slow progress in halting the decline in students' achievements and in making improvements in teaching and learning
- curriculum managers are insufficiently evaluative in the self-assessment of provision in their subject areas; assessments of teaching do not always focus on its impact on learning
- in planning students' study programmes, managers currently make insufficient use of the wide range of additional activities available at the college to widen students' experience.

This provider has the following strengths:

- most students progress from AS-level to A-level, and most achieve their A-level qualifications
- teachers and support staff provide good advice and guidance on careers and higher education; students' progression from the college to university, employment or further training is good
- teachers make good use of group work and peer assessment to develop students' collaborative and team working skills; students work with one another with sensitivity and insight
- staff at the college provide a welcoming and safe environment for students in which they feel valued and respected; they enjoy life at the college and are proud of its history
- the curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of students and the local economy
- senior managers are highly evaluative and their self-assessment of the college's provision and its areas for improvement are accurate.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Implement in full the planned programme of improvements in teaching, learning and assessment, in order to improve outcomes for students.
- Develop teachers' practice in providing learning that meets individual students' needs, so that all make good progress in their studies and achieve well.
- Ensure that teachers make more effective use of exercises and activities so that they monitor students' learning more effectively and develop and extend students' understanding more fully.
- Ensure that feedback on assessment is always detailed and gives students clear information on how they can improve their performance and progress.
- Make more effective use of enrichment activities and work experience in students' study programmes to assist in preparing students for higher education and employment.
- Ensure that curriculum self-assessment and observations of teaching provide sufficiently evaluative information to enable managers to make sustainable improvements.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Strode's College offers study programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds at levels 2 and 3. Most students study at level 3. Almost half of these study a mixture of vocational and AS- or A-level courses. The college also offers a small programme of part-time courses at level 2 or below to adults.
- Over recent years the proportion of students gaining their A- or AS-level qualification has declined from an earlier, high rate of attainment. Although a high proportion of students pass their A-level examinations, the proportion of students that is successful at AS level requires improvement. Many students include vocational qualifications in their study programmes and most complete them successfully. Too few students gain a grade C or above at GCSE.
- Students make insufficient progress on their A- and AS-level courses. In nearly half their A- and AS-level examinations in 2013/14, students did less well than might be expected, given their starting points. Managers have taken recent action to improve students' attainment, and early signs are encouraging. For example, mock examination results in underperforming subjects were better in 2015 than in 2014, and over 30% of students are now working well towards target grades that are higher than those predicted by their GCSE results.
- Students' attendance at lessons is good; students are punctual and arrive at lessons ready to study. They are confident and articulate, work attentively and contribute well to class discussion or group work. They develop good collaborative and team working skills. For example, they work together productively, assessing the work of their fellow students with sensitivity and insight, giving constructive feedback to their peers. However, students' attendance at tutorials is less good; students do not always see the value of group tutorial sessions, particularly once they have completed their applications for higher education.
- Students' progression from AS to A level, and to higher education or employment, is good. Managers collect detailed destination data on students and analyse it carefully. Having completed their AS-level qualifications, a high proportion of students go on to A level. In 2014, the majority of A-level students gained places at higher education. Most of the remaining students went into employment or further education and training.
- Students acquire good technical vocabulary in their subjects and become confident in using this well. However, the development of students' English and mathematics skills is not uniformly

good; teachers do not routinely reinforce or develop these skills in lessons when suitable opportunities arise.

- Students on vocational courses have suitable opportunities to participate in work experience to develop their skills. The college offers a wide range of activities designed to enrich students' programmes, develop their personal and social skills and prepare them for higher education and employment. Students participate in these activities well, gaining valuable skills and insights in the process. However, managers do not yet make sufficient use of these activities in planning study programmes to ensure that students are directed to activities that might be of greatest benefit to them.
- Managers use data well to monitor the performance of different groups of students; they take action if there are imbalances in pass rates or progress. For example, in 2013/14, they improved the progress of male students at A level so that it matched that of female students. Managers have begun to use data on students' prior attainment more effectively to help ensure that all students make good progress.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The very large majority of students achieve their A-level and vocational qualifications, but too many make slower progress than expected and do not gain sufficiently high grades in their examinations.
- Teachers do not always ensure that their planning and teaching take suitable account of the different levels of students' abilities or starting points. For example, teachers design worksheets for a whole group without sufficient attention to students' individual needs, for example those who learn more quickly or slowly than others in the group. As a result, students do not improve their knowledge and understanding as well as they might.
- Students with high grades in English and mathematics GCSE do not routinely improve their English and mathematics skills during their study programmes. Teachers do not focus sufficiently and explicitly on using opportunities in their teaching to develop greater proficiency in mathematics and English.
- Teachers are very effective in developing students' understanding of the technical aspects and use of subject specific language. For example, in classical civilisation, students' appropriate and effective use of key terms such as 'nostos' and 'pathos' demonstrated their understanding and vibrant enjoyment of the subject.
- Teachers give students clear and helpful feedback on how well they have done and on the standards they have achieved. However, teachers' feedback on how to improve is often too general, urging students, for example, to 'pay greater attention to detail' or 'present your argument more logically', without stating how to do this or providing further specific guidance. Teachers' assessment of written work does not regularly correct spelling or incorrect use of English to help students improve.
- Teachers use peer learning effectively, for example when engaging students in debates on the efficacy of the nuclear deterrent and its consequences. Students successfully, and with much enthusiasm, learn from each other as a result of working in pairs or small groups. Such activities help students to develop independent thinking skills that prepare them well for higher education and employment.
- In too many lessons, teachers spend too much time in lengthy or repetitive explanations. Their well-intentioned efforts to help and direct students to understand in this way often result in students becoming uninterested and distracted and they do not learn how to work effectively on their own.
- Well-qualified learning support assistants contribute effectively to students' learning in lessons. Teachers, tutors and specialist staff provide good pastoral support for personal needs. Students benefit from the range of support available to them, such as counselling, chaplaincy and health advice.

- Teachers do not promote understanding of equality and diversity actively enough in lessons, although their promotion is good outside the classroom. Where specific topics are defined in the subject specifications, teachers use these well and students enjoy the discussions and broaden their understanding.
- Assessment of students' needs at the start of their courses is sound and all students are set appropriate target grades for their examinations. In personal tutorials, tutors review students' target grades regularly and the new tutorial system ensures that tutors monitor students' progress towards these targets. Group tutorials are less productive for students as these too frequently focus on giving information and announcements. Not all tutors make the benefits of the topics sufficiently clear and relevant.
- Teachers and support staff give students appropriate information, advice and guidance. This is complemented well by good careers, personal health and other welfare advice. As a result, students gain a clearer idea of their next steps in learning or employment.
- Students benefit from a well-considered range of activities that enriches their studies. The student council and the student guidance team are developing interesting and relevant activities to broaden students' experiences and ensure themed events have greater impact in teaching. Teachers and support staff give students good advice in preparation for higher education. Students on vocational programmes have a suitable formal programme of work experience.

Science, mathematics and statistics

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in science and mathematics require improvement because:

- teachers do not plan learning that ensures learners make sufficient progress and gain the examination grades they should, given their starting points; most students achieve their qualifications in A-level sciences and mathematics, but the proportion of students who achieve qualifications in most AS-level and GCSE subjects requires improvement
- teachers do not always plan and prepare activities that meet the specific needs of individual students; students carry out activities which some find too easy, whilst other students need more guidance to complete them
- teachers do not always make efficient use of lesson time; the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow to give students good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied or extend understanding sufficiently
- in whole group work, teachers check students' answers to questions but make insufficient use of these answers to probe or develop students' understanding
- teachers provide insufficient opportunity for students to develop their problem-solving skills and then apply them to other mathematical and scientific situations
- in their assessment of students' work, teachers' feedback does not provide sufficiently clear and specific guidance to students on how they can improve
- teachers do not make sufficient links between skills learned and their use beyond college and the examination; students cannot explain how they might apply these skills in employment.

In science, mathematics and statistics the provider has the following strengths:

- in A-level mathematics, teachers manage and plan learning very well to create productive learning environments where students make good progress; for example, students solve complex mathematical sequences using wall boards to 'spread their thoughts' and help each other

- teachers have high expectations and in a minority of lessons they challenge and support students well to tackle more difficult problems; students enjoy persevering until they are successful
- learning support assistants work well with teachers, making effective use of questions and prompts to help students who need additional support
- students make good use of helpful resources to aid learning, including those on the college's virtual learning environment; these aids make complex topics, such as wave motion or the pumping action of the heart, more understandable and memorable for students
- teachers use high level technical language well to develop students' understanding of mathematical and scientific terminology, students have good listening skills and use this terminology fluently and with confidence.

Performing arts

Good

16-19 study programmes

Teaching, learning and assessment in performing arts are good because:

- most students achieve their AS-or A-level qualifications and the standard of their work is good; students' progress is good in dance, music technology and on vocational courses at level 3; in other performing arts subjects, students do not always make the progress they should, given their starting points
- teachers plan learning that is well matched to learners' individual needs and helps most make good progress
- teachers make good use of demanding exercises and activities to develop high levels of trust between students in ensemble work or theatre pieces; this enables students to reach high performance standards
- teachers make good use of links with a national ballet company, conservatoires and specialist drama schools to promote high standards in students' work and develop their work-related skills; teachers make good use of visits to theatre productions to enrich students' learning
- in their assessments, teachers give students frequent and clear feedback on how well they have done and what they need to improve; teachers make good use of questions to develop students' ideas and use of technical vocabulary
- teachers make particularly good use of a diverse and appropriate range of scripts and dance influences to develop students' understanding of equality and diversity

In performing arts the provider is not yet outstanding because:

- teachers do not always make sufficient use of the questions they ask to check students' learning, probe their understanding or develop it further
- the individual learning targets that teachers agree with their students' are not always specific or demanding enough to help students make better progress
- teachers' monitoring of students' progress, though more rigorous than in previous years, is not yet well-established

Visual arts**16-19 study programmes**

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in visual arts require improvement because:

- most students achieve their AS-or A-level qualifications but do not always make sufficient progress to gain the grades they should, given their starting points
- teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' individual starting points to plan learning that ensures that all students make good progress and achieve well
- teachers do not make sufficient use of the questions they ask to assess students' learning, probe their understanding or develop it further
- in a minority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow and not all students progress well; teachers are not sufficiently effective in encouraging students to take part and develop their ideas and skills
- teachers make insufficient use of activities such as live project briefs, active partnership with arts organisations or work experience to develop students' understanding of employment in the arts
- teachers do not set sufficiently precise targets for students; teachers and tutors do not review students' progress in meeting these targets frequently enough and students do not always achieve them in the time planned

In visual arts the provider has the following strengths because:

- teachers select stimulating materials and project briefs for students that interest them and challenge their critical thinking and technical skills; they enrich their studies with visits to galleries and exhibitions and use these well as the basis for students' primary research
- teachers give students good written feedback on students' assignments to help them improve; in class and on assignments they are effective in developing students' technical vocabulary and use of English
- teachers make good use of peer reviews to develop students' evaluative skills, encouraging students to share practice and ideas to aid their development; students give one another sensitive and insightful feedback
- teachers give students good additional support and access to studio facilities to enable them to practise and meet assignment deadlines; additional learning support is good and learners speak highly of the support they receive

Social sciences**16-19 study programmes**

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in social sciences require improvement because:

- teachers do not provide learning that enables students to achieve well; most students gain their A-level qualifications, but do not attain sufficiently high grades in these awards; at AS level, students make insufficient progress relative to their starting points and the proportion that gains the qualification requires improvement
- teachers do not always plan learning activities that meet individual students' needs, particularly the more able; they do not help these students to extend their knowledge and understanding and gain higher grades in their examinations

- teachers do not always pace learning effectively; in some instances students are given insufficient opportunity to study material in detail to produce high quality responses; in others, students spend too long on tasks that are too easy
- in class discussions and debates, teachers do not probe students' contributions well enough to tease out or develop students' understanding or help students apply it more widely; students have insufficient opportunity to learn from each other
- teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of methods for assessing students' learning and understanding in class
- in planning learning, teachers do not make sufficient use of naturally occurring opportunities to discuss race, gender or social inequality to develop students' understanding of these topics.

In social sciences the provider has the following strengths:

- teachers now have high expectations of students; they successfully encourage students to prepare well for lessons, work hard to achieve high standards and improve their learning
- in the most effective lessons, teachers plan learning carefully to ensure students make good progress; they make effective use of a wide range of learning activities to help improve students' knowledge and check carefully that students are making progress
- teachers make good use of group work and 'buddy' systems to promote collaborative working among students; this helps students' learning and develops good team working skills
- teachers have made recent improvements in their assessment practice and their written assessment is now regular and demanding; teachers mark closely, making clear points for improvement that are linked carefully to assessment criteria and key terminology to help students progress
- teachers focus closely on preparation for examinations and examination techniques; they provide helpful support and revision sessions and a wide range of materials on the college's virtual learning environment; students use these well to help them answer questions in depth and detail.

English

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in English require improvement because:

- in too many lessons, teachers do not devise tasks or assignments that enable students, particularly the most able, to make sufficient progress; many A-level students do not achieve the examination grades that their prior attainment suggests they should, and too few GCSE students improve their grades
- in a minority of lessons, teachers do not develop students' ability to prepare answers to searching questions or explore and evaluate topics in sufficient depth
- teachers' management of group work impedes students' progress; on some occasions, teachers end group work before students have developed their ideas fully and, on other occasions, they allow too much time for the activity and students lose concentration
- the assessment of GCSE students' work requires improvement; teachers do not use it to improve students' spelling and their marks do not relate to grades or targets for students' achievement
- teachers do not plan for the development of students' awareness of the skills required in employment and overlook naturally occurring opportunities to develop this awareness
- in a subject rich with possibilities, teachers do not always take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to explore and develop students' understanding of equality and diversity.

In English the provider has the following strengths:

- teachers create positive learning environments in which students have the confidence to express their ideas; teachers share their passion for English and students enjoy their studies and attend lessons regularly
- students assess and appraise their own work and that of others well, and with sensitivity; teachers' assessment of students' A-level work is good; teachers mark work promptly, giving students clear and constructive feedback
- teachers know their students well and give them good support outside lessons; classroom assistants work well with teachers to provide beneficial additional learning support to those students who need it
- in a minority of lessons, teachers make good use of the technology available, for example encouraging students to use internet 'blogs' to explore the language of that medium or to create internet links to resources
- teachers ensure that a large amount of resource material in English is available on the college's virtual learning environment; the materials are well organised, easily accessible and students make good use of them.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers at the college were slow to implement effective strategies to support improvements in the quality of provision for students and their success when examination results began to fall. The current strategic plan, 2012–15, is detailed and clear, but the college has yet to achieve its identified key measures of success. Since 2014, the pace and effectiveness of change have demonstrably improved and early signs are encouraging.
- The governing body was initially slow to react to a decline in students' performance at AS and A level. Changes in the operation of the governing body from 2014, including a new chair of governors and new chair of the quality and curriculum committee, have enabled governors to make better use of their highly relevant skills and expertise. They now have a good understanding of curriculum matters and provide very effective challenge and support to senior leaders.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good. Senior managers have developed the college's performance management programme and since 2014 it has become more rigorous, with the introduction of a revised professional development review and the identification of clear targets for all staff to secure improvements. Managers support under-performing staff well to help them improve; those unable to do so have left the college.
- Senior managers now have well-developed arrangements to monitor the quality of provision in each subject area. However, they carry out insufficient cross-college monitoring of key developments and priorities such as the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons or the development of students' skills in English and mathematics. The college's strategy for these priorities is sound, but managers do not always ensure that it is implemented routinely. Managers' observations of teaching and learning do not always focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress.
- The college does not yet have a sound track record of sustainable improvement, although in 2014/15 it is better equipped to secure much-needed improvements. Managers analyse and evaluate data on students' performance particularly well. Their college self-assessment process is thorough and self-critical. The resulting self-assessment report is detailed and accurate. At curriculum level, however, self-assessment reports are insufficiently evaluative.
- Arrangements to gather the views of all students and to ensure their effective contribution to college decision-making improved significantly in 2014. The establishment of a student parliament provides students with greater opportunities to reflect on, and contribute to, improvements. Students are currently contributing to discussions in relation to the development of the college's new strategic plan from September 2015.

- The college has very good links with local colleges, universities and community groups, with joint projects and wide-ranging staff development activities. Strategies to engage with parents and local schools in the transition of students to the college are very effective. The college has historic and beneficial links with a City of London Livery Company and its members.
- Senior leaders' strategic and curriculum planning is very responsive to local needs and the college has responded appropriately to the introduction of study programmes. Students study beneficial combinations of both academic and vocational subjects at intermediate and advanced levels. The college also provides leisure courses for adult students, as well as a small number of accredited classes, for example in English, mathematics and ESOL, which meet the needs of adult students in the local area.
- The college's core values of respect for all staff and students and of valuing diversity underpin all its work. Managers' cross-college promotion of equality and diversity is strong. Students take part in a wide range of activities that support the development of their understanding of key equality topics. They have, for example, been closely involved in a 'Respect' project to develop their skills in public speaking on equalities. Staff implement policies in relation to bullying and harassment effectively. However, the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning is less well established.
- Managers carefully evaluate the college's work to promote equality and diversity and identify clear actions to secure on-going improvements. They make good use of data to analyse the performance of different groups, and provide targeted support to improve the performance and progress of any groups of students who achieve less well. Managers have improved their use of data to help teachers plan learning that enables all students to make good progress and achieve the grades, or better, that might be predicted from their GCSE results on entry to the college.
- College policies and procedures for safeguarding are comprehensive and detailed. However, they are not always sufficiently well understood by all staff and students, and safeguarding requires improvement. The college meets its statutory responsibility for safeguarding and its links with the local safeguarding board are good.
- Staff at the college provide very effective support for students in relation to safeguarding matters. Students have good access to the college's professional counselling service which makes appropriate referrals to external agencies. Attention to e-safety is good. Work with staff and students on the 'Prevent' agenda to counter terrorism and radicalisation is well considered and includes recent training for staff.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Strode's College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	3
Performing arts	2
Visual arts	3
Social sciences	3
English	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Strode's College							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full time	1,370						
	Part time	1,029						
	Total	2,399						
Principal/CEO	Anne Fielding Smith							
Date of previous inspection	June 2009							
Website address	http://www.strodes.ac.uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	193	56	95	1126	48	-	1
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	-							
Funding received from	EFA SFA							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

Contextual information

Strode's College is a small sixth form college in Surrey. The vast majority of its students are aged between 16 and 19 years and on courses leading to qualifications at level 3. The college also offers courses to adults locally; most of these pay their own fees. It offers courses in 12 sector subject areas and attracts students from a range of socio-economic areas in and around Egham, Berkshire, and the London Boroughs of Richmond and Twickenham.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Penelope Horner HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Assistant Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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