

Thanet College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130728

Name of lead inspector: David Martin HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. Thanet College is a medium-sized general further education college, primarily based on an 11 acre site overlooking the sea, in Broadstairs, Kent. Additionally, it has two community bases in Margate and Ramsgate, a separate site for construction trades in Broadstairs and a range of community venues across the wider Isle of Thanet. Since the previous inspection, the college's well-advanced plans to relocate to a new campus had to be abandoned in the unexpected absence of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding.
2. The college offers courses across all 15 subject areas, providing a primarily vocational curriculum, including Train to Gain and apprenticeship provision. It has project funding to work with the long-term unemployed. At the time of the inspection the college had 2,076 full-time learners, a considerable increase from 2009/10, with the majority on foundation and intermediate courses. Around 30% of full-time learners are aged 19 and over. The majority of part-time learners are aged 19 and over and study foundation and intermediate courses. The number of young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, at 31.7% in 2009/10. A modest provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 and a small higher education offer stem from the college's partnerships with schools and with Canterbury Christ Church University.
3. Thanet has a population of around 130,000 and has some of the most deprived wards in the south east of England. Decline in manufacturing and tourism is characterised by high unemployment, currently at 5% against Kent and national averages of 3% and 3.6% respectively, low wages and low educational attainment. In 2009/10, 39.6% of the college's young learners came from the most deprived wards in Thanet with 80% eligible for Educational Maintenance Allowance payments. Economic and social regeneration is being facilitated by some significant commercial developments, including the Westwood Cross retail and business park.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Canterbury Christ Church University
 - Optimorph
 - East Kent ITec.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	112 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	1,123 full-time learners 439 part-time learners
Foundation learning, including	295 full-time learners 149 part-time learners
Entry to Employment	10 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	546 full-time learners 1,747 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	591 learners
Apprenticeships	198 apprentices

Summary report

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

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

Subject Areas	
Health and social care	3
Information and communication technology	3
Arts, media and publishing	3
Literacy, numeracy and language	2

Overall effectiveness

5. Thanet is a satisfactory college, which has good capacity to make further improvement. It has already made good progress in tackling key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory, but improving, as is the case with the college's self-assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses. The college's use of accurate and comprehensive data on learners' achievements is good.
6. Learners achieve satisfactory outcomes overall and enjoy their learning. Overall college outcomes for young learners on further education courses are satisfactory, but with poorer outcomes in some subject areas. Outcomes for adult learners are good overall. Outcomes for learners following apprenticeship and Train to Gain courses are good. Learners' skills and standards of work are at least satisfactory and sometimes better. Learners make satisfactory progress on their courses and an increasing proportion continue with their studies to

higher levels, often at the college. Learners feel safe in the college and the college's arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory.

7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They have improved since the previous inspection, when there was inadequate teaching, but too much teaching is still no better than satisfactory. Teachers often provide interesting and meaningful activities and in many lessons use information learning technologies (ILT) successfully. However, planning teaching to meet the needs of the wide range of learners in lessons and systematically checking their understanding receive insufficient attention.
8. A broad range of courses meets a wide range of learners' needs and that of the local community. The college's extensive partnerships with other organisations are good in helping to improve the quality of learners' courses. Employers' needs are well met. The care, guidance and support of learners are satisfactory. College-wide arrangements to better support learners have recently been introduced.
9. The college is well led. Learners are at the centre of its work and ambitions. They have good opportunities to express their views, which are listened to. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, but insufficiently promoted in lessons.

Main findings

- Learners' attainment of qualifications is satisfactory. Overall success rates for further education learners have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now just above the national average for similar colleges. Although satisfactory overall, success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are lower than for those aged 19 and over and on some courses they are poor.
- Success rates and completion within expected timescales are good for apprentices and Train to Gain learners. Outcomes for the latter are particularly high in 2009/10.
- Learners' skills and standards of work are satisfactory or better. Learners often make sound progress. Learners enjoy their studies, are well motivated and develop the confidence to engage in further learning. Progression to further studies at the college is satisfactory overall and good at some levels of course.
- Learners feel safe in the college, in workplaces and in community venues and value the increased attention to security at the main college site. Arrangements to manage safeguarding issues are satisfactory, although risk assessments for learners and employers are not always sufficiently detailed or relevant.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Teachers often provide interesting and meaningful activities and in many lessons use ILT successfully. However, in too many lessons, teachers do not plan for a wide range of abilities or sufficiently check learning.

- The proportion of good or better teaching has increased since the previous inspection, but the quality of lessons remains variable across all subject areas and at all levels of courses. The previous college system for the observation of teaching and learning, now changed, had insufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The college is particularly proactive in building partnerships with schools, employers, business communities and community groups. New and longstanding partnerships lead to carefully designed courses that meet sector-specific needs, including programmes to support renewable energy employers. Many courses are flexibly delivered in a variety of locations to meet employers' and learners' needs.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Individual support by teachers is good. Recently changed college-wide arrangements, to support learners' pastoral and academic needs, do not yet provide sufficient information for tutors and learning mentors to help fully address these needs.
- Learners use an excellent range of opportunities to express their views. The college captures and acts on learners' views well. It considers their views carefully and responds clearly to them on actions taken.
- Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted, but are not comprehensively addressed in most curriculum areas, especially in lessons. Many initiatives to improve college approaches to equality and diversity have been introduced or are planned. Initiatives to reduce variations in success rates between different groups of learners have generally been effective.
- Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Self-assessment, which has improved since the previous inspection, is inclusive of all staff and learners. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate in its judgements. The college's scheme for lesson observation has been strengthened to improve the pace of overall improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strong leadership, supported by the restructured management team and governors, communicates its plans for the future development of the college very effectively to staff and learners. The college provides good value for money.

What does Thanet College need to do to improve further?

- Improve poorer success rates in under-performing courses by further building on the college's good work to improve learners' retention and share the college's good practice in improving pass rates.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by pursuing with rigour the college's new arrangements for lesson observations and the associated support and mentoring for teachers.
- Ensure, when individual risk assessments are needed for young and vulnerable learners, that there is sufficient detail to protect the learner and reduce risks to themselves and others.

- Develop the newly introduced arrangements to support learners, to better inform tutors and learning mentors about learners' needs and to provide an integrated approach to supporting learner progress and achievement.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity in subject areas, especially in lessons, to more fully develop learners' and staff understanding.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- teachers who are patient and encouraging
- feeling safe and protected
- the college's welcoming atmosphere
- gaining experience in the job whilst working towards a qualification.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more access to laptop and personal computers
- access to study space when not in lessons
- more educational visits and trips
- work-based learners would like to understand and use the college's virtual learning environment, 'The Learning Curve'.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- training at employers' premises that is flexible and meets the needs of staff and businesses
- the willingness of the college to listen to criticism and make any necessary changes
- good communication between the assessors, learners and employers.

What employers would like to see improved:

- coverage of the full range of job-specific training in addition to training to achieve qualification competences.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. The college and governors work well together to set demanding targets to drive forward improvements. Strategic and operational targets are well founded. The college's clear strategic vision is successfully shared with all staff and learners. Overall, quality improvement is satisfactory. Recent senior management changes are already impacting positively on the clarity and focus of self-assessment and improvement planning. Self-assessment is inclusive of the views of all stakeholders and is largely accurate in its judgements. The college uses management information well to inform their plans for improvement.
11. The college has made good progress in rectifying key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Overall success rates for further education learners have improved significantly and outcomes are now good for work-based learners. Teaching and learning are improving. The college has managed its accommodation strategy particularly well, in difficult circumstances. Established formal partnerships with local businesses, employers and education providers are very productive for learners.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

12. Learners' attainment of their qualifications is satisfactory. The overall college success rate has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Based on college data for 2009/10, it is now just above the national average for general further education colleges. For long courses, constituting the largest part of provision, the overall success rate is just above the national average. Success rates for the much smaller number of short and very short courses have not improved consistently over the last three years and are now at the national averages for learners aged 16 to 18 and just below for learners aged 19 and over.
13. Overall success on long courses is considerably better for learners aged 19 and over. It was nearly six percentage points above national averages in 2009/10, when success rates at all levels exceed national averages especially for intermediate and advanced courses. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are very much at, or around, the national average, especially for foundation and intermediate courses. For advanced courses, the success rate is just below.
14. The steady improvement in success rates is evident in many subject areas. In some, progress has been very marked, with overall success above national comparators, as in engineering and manufacturing technologies and in retail and commercial enterprises. Subject areas which, in 2009/10, performed significantly less well, included health and social care, for learners aged 16 to 18 and information and communication technology (ICT), for some full-time learners. Key skills achievements are now good, having improved in 2009/10 to

around 78%. The relatively small number of linked school pupils aged 14 to 16, around 250, achieved well in 2009/10, with an overall success rate of 87%.

15. Learners' outcomes for employer responsive provision are good overall, and much improved in 2009/10. Success rates in the planned timescale are high for Train to Gain and well above the national average. Apprenticeship success rates in the agreed time are good and overall success rates are just above the national average.
16. Learners make satisfactory progress overall on their courses. In some subject areas, as in health and social care, the extent of progress is better for adults.. The college makes little use of value added measures to determine learners' progress in relation to their starting points, although it is beginning to address this. Learners' progression between levels of study is satisfactory. From entry level, there is good progression to further college courses, at around 60% over the last two years. An increasing percentage progress to higher education on leaving the college.
17. Other than the poorer overall performance for learners aged 16 to 18, there are no significant differences in the performance of different groups of learners. The performance of females and male learners is now broadly equal, representing a narrowing of an earlier achievement gap for the college.
18. Learners make satisfactory progress in improving their economic and social well-being. Their standards of work, and the skills they develop, are at least satisfactory and sometimes good or better. Learners are well motivated, well behaved, enjoy their studies and develop the confidence and enthusiasm to study further. Attendance is gradually improving and is good. Learners' punctuality is satisfactory.
19. Learners feel safe within the college. They have good opportunities through the college's curriculum and supporting activities to help them make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Learners make a good contribution to both the college and local communities, significantly facilitated by the extensive and successful promotion of the 'Learner Voice'.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

20. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teaching and learning are satisfactory. The proportion of lessons which are good or better has increased since the previous inspection, but the quality of lessons remains variable across all subject areas and at all levels.
21. In the best lessons there is development of high order skills and good planning for individual learning through a range of interesting activities. Frequent checks are made to ensure that learning is taking place and learners' progress is generally good. However, too many lessons remain insufficiently focused on learning and in a significant number, teaching is dull and uninspiring, with

limited account taken of the diverse needs of individual learners. In these lessons learners find it difficult to maintain their interest and make progress.

22. The college's system of lesson observation has recently been strengthened, following consultation and external review. An improved and consistent approach to grading, with observation integral to the review of teachers' performance, has resulted. In a small number of observations, areas for improvement identified are insufficiently detailed or relevant to improve learning and have insufficient focus on learning outcomes.
23. The college has a clear policy for essential and key skills, but the quality of implementation varies across the college. Essential skills are integral to personal learning plans and are used well to identify and set targets for learners. In apprenticeship training there is poor planning of key skills training with learners often repeating previous learning. There is no system to assess prior knowledge or planning to complete key skills in a timelier manner.
24. The monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. Tutorials now concentrate on learners' target setting, progress and academic standards, but the effectiveness of arrangements is inconsistent across subject areas. Some learner targets are precise and sharply focused on improvement whilst others are vague and of little value to tutors or learners. The college's intranet-based systems to support progress monitoring do not yet provide a comprehensive picture of individual learners' progress. For apprentices, learning plans and reviews insufficiently plan individual skills development needs.
25. Teaching approaches and learning materials are now more sensitive to equality and diversity, although learning at an individual level is insufficiently recognised, promoted or valued. Learners are beginning to make good use of the college's virtual learning environment to access materials and to view their individual learning plans. However, not all teachers use technology effectively to make lessons more interesting and enjoyable. Work-based learners receive insufficient support to make effective use of ILT in their learning.
26. Assessment practice is satisfactory and assessments build upon and extend learning. Most learners benefit from helpful feedback on homework and assignments which enables them to improve their knowledge and skills. For learners of information and communication technology (ICT) written feedback is extensive and prompts improvement.
27. Initial and diagnostic assessments provide a reliable basis for identifying learners' additional learning needs and the provision for literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. The vast majority of learners identified as requiring learning support take it up. They achieve higher success rates overall than learners not receiving additional support.
28. A good range of provision meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Courses provide satisfactory progression opportunities, from

entry to advanced level, in the majority of subject areas. Local market information is used effectively to ensure provision fits with the priorities and needs of Thanet. The college works closely with local schools to develop appropriate vocational courses for pupils aged 14 to 16. An alternative curriculum provides for young people excluded from school or those who have recently moved to the area. A good range of introductory and entry level courses are available in community-based locations at times and durations that fit with learners' other commitments, including courses in schools and children's centres for English as a second or other language.

29. The range of provision for work-based learners and employers is good. Flexibly-delivered programmes fit with workplace requirements and learners' needs. College-based learners benefit from hearing about, and experiencing, current occupational practices. Work-based learners participate in the college's enrichment activities, including sports and other personal development activities.
30. The college has good partnerships with a wide, and increasing, number of organisations. It has improved its profile amongst the local business community as the principal becomes more involved with the local chamber of commerce. Strong partnerships with employers ensure college-based learners have access to high quality work placements and employees access college courses. A recent successful sector-specific partnership, focused on the Thanet offshore wind farms, resulted in the college playing a key role in a high profile launch event. A related pre-employment course has been developed as a result.
31. The college proactively works with other Thanet-based organisations, such as jobcentre plus, the district council and migrant support groups, to deliver government funded projects. Partnerships with local special schools are well established and transitions planning for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Two large local employers allow learners with learning disabilities to develop employability skills in the workplace as part of an internship project.
32. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. College staff and employers provide good individual support to learners. Overall support arrangements have recently changed to improve the quality of service to learners but are not yet fully embedded. A new team of learning mentors provides a good range of support to learners with personal and welfare concerns. Links between them, specialist support staff and external agencies are developing well. The new college-wide database to record and monitor learners' progress is too new to provide comprehensive information to tutors and learning mentors.
33. Pre-course information is good for learners and employers. Learners receive a good induction to the college and their courses. Further information, advice and guidance are delivered through tutorials and student services. Support is available for learners interested in progressing to higher education. A full-time adviser provides good support to international learners. Insufficient information,

advice and guidance about progression opportunities are available to work-based learners.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

34. Leadership is strong. The recently appointed principal, newly structured management team and governors have completed a comprehensive review of the college's mission, vision, values and strategic aims. Managers set clear direction for the college and challenging targets for improvement. Management information is used very well to monitor and analyse learners' progress. Staff morale is very high. They are particularly well informed, and positive, about the changes the college has made and with the plans to improve provision and success rates. Very effective communications are supported by a good range of informal events and more formal meetings.
35. Governance is satisfactory. A new chair of the governing body and four new governors have recently been appointed. The new chairman is leading a review of governors' work, including sensible changes to committee structures. Governors have a wide range of skills and good local knowledge. They demonstrate a strong commitment to the college, provide a satisfactory oversight of the standards achieved by learners and appropriately challenge managers. Governors have adequate access to training within the college and are due to update their knowledge on safeguarding this term.
36. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. The college satisfactorily meets statutory requirements and demonstrates commitment to safeguarding learners and staff. However, the safeguarding policy does not fully reflect current practices. A recently formed safety team, including a college-based police community support officer, supports the work of the safeguarding officers and the anti-harassment team. However, activities across the teams are insufficiently coordinated. Effective links with external agencies are established and they are appropriately involved when incidents arise. The majority of staff have completed safeguarding awareness training and e-safety training forms part of an on-line course being taken this year. Risk assessments are completed for learners when needed, but they are insufficiently detailed, not always reflecting where learners are studying and working.
37. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall, but varies in how well it is promoted in lessons. A productive equality and diversity committee meets regularly. A single equality scheme is being developed, to be introduced by the end of the year. A disability equality scheme sets clear actions for improvement, which are regularly reviewed. Monthly promotional activities are planned well to build on the college's successful 'fair for all' week. Any harassment issues are dealt with promptly and incidents are appropriately reported and recorded. Data are collated, analysed and used well to inform managers about the performance of different groups of learners. Impact measures identify some improvements in enrolments of females to both engineering and construction courses. The gap between success rates for

learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and overall college success rates is successfully decreasing.

38. Arrangements for consulting learners, and using their views, are particularly effective. The college successfully encourages learners to be involved in all aspects of college life, including the selection of staff. Thanet College is one of five national competition finalists for the most improved college for the 'learner voice'. A student council is established. Learners make good use of the extensive opportunities to express their views. They feel listened to and valued. They use e-communications extensively to voice their views. The college regularly obtains employers' views through both informal and formal communication.
39. Arrangements for quality improvement and self-assessment are satisfactory, and improving. The self-assessment process is inclusive of the views of staff, learners, employers and governors. A new validation process, using representatives of external organisations and learners, was used for the self-assessment report 2009/10. Actions have been taken to improve the rigour of course reviews, which contribute to the final report. The self-assessment report is evaluative and largely accurate in its judgements. The revised structure of the improvement action plan clearly focuses on key areas for improvement.
40. Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced. Performance management arrangements are central to improving the skills of all staff through an extensive range of training opportunities and through staff appraisal.
41. Value for money is good. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory but show significant improvement. Staffing costs are relatively low. The college has a realistic property strategy to improve the buildings and resources of its site. Financial management and control are good. Sub-contracted provision is managed well.

Health and social care

Grade 3

Context

42. Courses are offered in health and social care, child care, counselling, public services, and complementary therapies, from entry level to supervisory and management level, including access to higher education courses. Two hundred and fifty learners aged 16 to 18 study full time. Learners aged 19 and over, of whom there are 361, mainly study part time. Currently, 88 learners aged 19 and over are on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses and 9 are on apprenticeship programmes.

Key Findings

- Learners' success rates overall are satisfactory, but are not consistently acceptable across the provision. Those for full- and part-time learners aged 19 and over, in health, counselling and complementary therapies, are satisfactory or better. However, for many learners aged 16 to 18 they are below national averages because of poor retention. Success rates on introductory and intermediate courses in public services are good.
- Outcomes on NVQs and apprenticeships are good, with success rates well above national averages.
- Learners aged 19 and over make good progress and achieve high standards of work and professional skill. In an aromatherapy lesson, learners readily used their good knowledge of physiology and anatomy to ensure effective and safe massage. Learners aged 16 to 18 produce work to satisfactory standards, make sound progress and link theory to professional practice well.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In better lessons, teachers engage learners fully in their learning through discussion and practical activities. They provide clear explanations and draw on their professional experience to make work interesting and vocationally relevant. Checking of learning is thorough. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.
- Teaching is insufficiently matched to individual learners' needs in poorer lessons. Teachers do not give learners sufficiently clear feedback on their contributions in lessons to help them improve. On advanced courses, for learners aged 16 to 18, teachers' expectations of their learners are too low and tasks inadequately develop critical thinking skills.
- Effective partnerships with industry and the world of work support learners' work on the broad range of courses offered. These help learners to acquire and enhance good professional skills in a workplace setting. Many are offered employment. Employer responsive provision is strong.
- Learners actively participate in a wide range of activities to enrich their core studies, both at home and abroad. Activities include visits to workplace and community venues, guest expert speakers visiting the college, opportunities to use specialist equipment not available in the college and leadership training.

- Learners feel safe in the college. They have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and practices and take full account of health and safety issues. Equality and diversity, embedded within the context of their courses, are satisfactorily promoted, but cultural awareness and its importance in a professional environment are insufficiently developed.
- Assessment of learners' work is satisfactory, although written feedback from teachers is sometimes insufficiently clear about what learners need to do to improve. Individual learning plans are of varying quality and insufficiently focus on the skills learners still need to develop. Assessment on NVQs and apprenticeship programmes is particularly rigorous and accurate.
- Support for learners is good. Teachers provide good support and the newly created learning mentors contribute well to learners' progress and personal development. The 'student buddy' system provides good peer support.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and good for employer responsive provision. The new closely-knit teaching team focus well on raising standards, including success rates. Self-assessment is accurate. Areas for improvement are identified and acted upon. This is already having a positive effect on the monitoring and recruitment of learners. Learners' views are valued and acted upon.

What does Thanet College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on poorer performing courses, especially for learners aged 16 to 18, by drawing upon the good practice in the area, including that for learners aged 19 and over.
- Improve retention on health and social care and child care courses through more effective matching of teaching to learners' needs.
- Improve teaching and learning by the better use of feedback to learners and increasing the level of challenge for those on advanced level programmes through tasks which develop their critical thinking skills.
- Review teaching, learning and assessment plans to enable the better promotion of cultural diversity in the curriculum.

Information and communication technology

Grade 3

Context

43. Vocational courses are available from foundation to advanced levels, including foundation certificate for IT users; intermediate diploma in ICT; advanced diploma in IT; certificate for IT users and ITQ NVQ. The provision is delivered by three divisions in the college. Of the 368 current learners, 65 are aged 16 to 18 and 303 are aged 19 and over.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates are high on full-time courses at advanced level and for learners aged 19 and over on part-time courses. On these courses, the quality of learners' work is good.
- Success rates are low on full-time courses, at foundation and intermediate levels, largely because of poor retention. On these courses the standard of learners' work is satisfactory.
- Learners' progression rates are satisfactory. Foundation learners progress well within the college or to employment. More than half the advanced level learners progress to higher education.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, activities are well planned and take account of the needs of individual learners. Teachers use a good variety of learning activities and question effectively. Learners develop good skills of analysis, evaluation and debate through productive collaborative working. The weaker lessons lack challenge or individual learner focus and learners' progress is slower.
- ILT is used well and imaginatively in lessons to support learning, including the many resources available on the college's virtual learning environment.
- Learners' target setting and progress monitoring are well managed. Many learners monitor their own progress online against the learning outcomes of the lesson. Personal learning plans are used effectively by teachers and learners to set and monitor targets, update progress and identify learners at risk.
- The range of provision is good. The vocational courses for practitioners successfully meet the needs and interests of full-time learners. Learners studying as executive business administrators take ITQ advanced level as part of their programme. Learners aged 19 and over benefit from well-planned provision in community venues and with a franchise partner.
- Good use is made of the range of partnerships to develop work experience opportunities and provide guest speakers to develop learners' employability and enterprise skills.
- Support for learners is good. Additional learning support is prepared and organised well and is always available in lessons for full-time learners at foundation and intermediate levels. Learners receiving support improve

confidence and organisational skills. Group tutorials promote a wide range of activities to encourage all aspects of personal development and work skills.

- Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report and course reviews use learners' views well and are evaluative, realistic and accurate. The resulting action plans are appropriate to help secure improvement.
- Improvement targets are used effectively, both for the area and for individual staff. Staff are set challenging targets, based on performance in their appraisal, and undertake relevant professional development.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The additional needs of individual learners are identified well. Equality and diversity are successfully included in group tutorials. However, there is insufficient evidence of embedding and promoting equality and diversity in lessons. There are very few females on full-time courses.

What does Thanet College need to do to improve further?

- Improve learners' retention and raise the success rates on underperforming courses by better promoting the sharing of good practice across all courses, at all levels and types of provision.
- Improve teaching and learning by focusing more on learning and developing challenge to improve individual learner progress.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity by developing strategies to embed equality and diversity themes in lessons.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 3

Context

44. Currently, 273 learners are enrolled, nearly 200 of whom are aged 16 to 18. Sixty six are on first diplomas in music practice, performing arts and, art and design, with 189 pursuing national diplomas in music practice, media production, performing arts, art and design and photography. Eight learners are in the final year of the national certificate in art and design and ten study A-level photography. Sixteen learners study on the part-time access to music courses based at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Key Findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates are high on first diplomas in music, performing arts and art and design and on the national diploma in performing arts. They are low on the national diploma in music and declining on the national diploma in media and the access course. The percentage of high grades is consistently below national averages for all courses.
- Retention rates are satisfactory overall. All first diploma courses and the national diploma in performing arts have high retention rates, well above the national averages. However, retention on other courses is no better than satisfactory and often poor. Attendance was satisfactory over the last academic year.
- The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory. It is outstanding in dance and drama, good in art and design and satisfactory in music and media. Overall, learners develop practical and professional skills enabling them to produce work to an appropriate standard. In dance and drama, learners discuss and analyse their work with much confidence.
- Learners make satisfactory progress. Many enter with low prior attainment and around a third require additional learning support. Good tutorial support facilitates clear targets for improvement. More motivated learners use teachers' feedback on the virtual learning environment to check their progress. Progression from intermediate to advanced courses and into higher education is good.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are outstanding in dance and drama lessons, where learners are challenged to improve their skills and analyse their performance, helped by sensitive and instructive feedback from teachers. The best teaching is well structured with a range of activities which prompt reflection and peer evaluation.
- Less effective lessons are often teacher dominated, with little learner involvement or discussion. Learners are passive and remain unchallenged, with little checking of understanding by the teacher.
- Appropriate initial assessment of learners' needs provides readily available learner information to teachers. However, lesson planning to support the identified needs of individual learners is not always effective. Where extension

activities are prepared they are generally a continuation of existing work, rather than at a more advanced level, or are for the whole group.

- Safeguarding is satisfactory and learners feel safe. Health and safety themes are embedded in dance and drama and appropriately reinforced in art and design. In music, insufficient attention is given to wearing ear protection and to the appropriate management of cables. 'Student Ambassadors' take good account of fellow learners' views and are successful in informing and influencing improvements.
- An extensive enrichment programme, building on positive partnerships with industry, enables learners to participate in a range of vocational opportunities. They work with practising creative arts professionals and exhibit and perform their work publicly in a professional context. The new Turner Gallery is providing opportunities and placements for film, media, documentary and art work.
- Curriculum management and quality improvement are satisfactory. Staff feel valued and contribute well. Course reviews are realistic. They accurately identify areas for improvement and in most cases there are clear action plans for improvement. However, the self-assessment report over-emphasises positives and is insufficiently analytical and self critical.
- Professional development opportunities are good. The college's virtual learning environment, 'The Learning Curve' is beginning to have a positive impact on resources and ways that teachers can improve their lessons. In a small number of cases, the support and mentoring for new and less experienced teachers are insufficient.
- Lesson observation grades awarded by the college are sometimes over generous and the observations do not focus sufficiently on how the lesson meets the individual needs of learners. Consideration of critical reflection and promoting the confidence for independent learning is insufficient.

What does Thanet College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates, particularly retention rates and improve the percentage of high grades by providing learners with clear targets including challenging grades and monitor their progress more effectively.
- Improve teaching and learning by identifying and sharing good practice in lessons. Review lesson planning to ensure that all learners' individual needs are met and that learners are sufficiently challenged to enjoy their work and to reach their full potential.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment by ensuring that judgements accurately reflect those in the realistic course reviews and by better use of the outcomes of lesson observation to identify key themes for improvement.

Literacy, numeracy and language

Grade 2

Context

45. Most current provision is for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), although in previous years the number of adult literacy and numeracy courses has grown later in the academic year. National funding changes are likely to reduce the number of adult literacy and numeracy courses this year. Currently, 179 learners are enrolled, with 60 attending full time. Most of these study ESOL, with relatively small numbers for numeracy. Courses run from 2 to 15 hours a week, including those in the wider community.

Key Findings

- Overall success rates are good and exceed national averages. Intermediate literacy short course success rates are particularly high. Overall numeracy success rates are high. Current learners are making good progress. Seventy per cent of learners on full-time and sixty per cent on part-time courses have progressed from lower level courses. Attendance is good.
- Learners make big gains in confidence. Some learners, who spoke no English at all, can now conduct their own business and social affairs in English. ESOL learners are able to integrate more into general society. Parents are now able to help with their children's homework. Numeracy learners have better budgeting skills. Nearly all learners are fired with ambition to pursue higher studies.
- Learners feel safe. College security is strong with a current emphasis on the visible display of identity badges. Health and safety are effectively practised in lessons. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The college has a strong anti-bullying ethos, embedded in most schemes of work. Many learners attend sessions on drugs, sexual health and alcohol.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, highly motivated and energetic teachers use a wide variety of methods and brisk pace to successfully improve learners' verbal skills and confidence. A very inclusive classroom culture ensures that learners participate. However, in a few cases, lesson plans do not always identify individual learner needs.
- Good use is made of learning materials, often linked to exercises with learners recording their own speech and conversations. Many teachers devise imaginative resources, but they do not always share these with colleagues. Few classrooms have ILT facilities and not all teachers are able to use ILT effectively. Whiteboards are not always used well and are sometimes jumbled and difficult to read.
- Learning support is good. Good use is made of the virtual learning environment to record and update learning plans. Targets are task related and linked to everyday life. Additional learning needs are recorded in most lesson plans. Reviews accurately record both learners' progress and their broader social

and/or commercial aims. Full diagnostic testing is in place and extra help, including dyslexia support, is available.

- The college provides a good range of courses for learners, enabling them to fit their learning around their other commitments. Last academic year, the college provided a full range of literacy and numeracy courses on site and across community centres. A similar range is planned for the current year, but implementation has been slower.
- Good links exist with 15 schools and 6 children's centres, all with high migrant populations, to provide ESOL classes for parents. Class times, that include Saturday mornings, are arranged to maximise accessibility and are due to start later in the autumn term. Productive links are maintained with migrant and refugee support groups.
- A specialist adviser provides good support and actively works with teachers and external agencies. Recent interventions include help with work permits, transport of possessions, travel documents, references, family issues, police liaison and settlement problems. Additional financial help has been given. Learners are aware how to access help and are supported by vigilant teachers.
- Departmental management is good. Accommodation is good. Outreach community centres are resourced well. The planning of staff development is good and monitored closely. Teachers are set performance targets. Experienced teachers mentor newer colleagues and learning mentors actively work with learners who are failing. The sharing of good practice is insufficiently promoted and supported by management arrangements.
- Equality and diversity are celebrated, including through many posters throughout all venues. Teachers embed and promote equality and diversity in lessons and have a good understanding of potential issues. Misbehaviour is immediately and effectively dealt with and prompt action is taken on any complaints.
- Quality improvement is good. Managers closely monitor performance and good progress is made in meeting development targets. The self-assessment process inclusively involves all staff, in both evidence gathering and monitoring. Good use is made of the views of learners. Inspection findings are very similar to those identified in the self-assessment report.

What does Thanet College need to do to improve further?

- Formalise the sharing of good practice to enable existing good practice in detailed lesson planning, imaginative resources and innovative teaching to be shared across the entire department.
- Implement a more rapid programme to provide ILT in most classrooms and plan a comprehensive programme to train teachers in its best use.

Information about the inspection

46. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspections, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
47. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews, both at the college and at employers' premises. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Thanet 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 at the time of inspection					
Full-time learners	2,076	0	1,394	682	0
Part-time learners	998	188	102	540	356
Overall effectiveness	3	2	3	3	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	3	2	3	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
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	3	3	3	3	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
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?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
Leadership and management	3	2	3	3	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?*	3				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for 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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