

Inspection of Stanmore College

Inspection dates: 25 to 28 April 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Stanmore College is a general further education college in north west London. The college operates from its main site in Stanmore. Some young learners study sports programmes at five satellite centres in Crystal Palace, Kingsbury, Welling, Dunstable and Slough.

At the time of the inspection, the college taught 2,681 learners, of whom 1,324 were aged under 19 and 1,263 were aged 19 and above. There were 82 learners in receipt of high needs funding. In addition, there were five apprentices on different standards in health and social care.

The college provides education and training qualifications from entry level up. The majority of learners study courses in English, mathematics, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Most learners on study programmes follow vocational pathways in sports, business, engineering, science, information technology, childcare and art and design.

The college works with two subcontractors, Salon Hijab and Blossom Beauty, which teach level 2 hair and beauty courses to adult learners.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners study in a calm and orderly environment. They see the college as a friendly and inclusive place, where they build positive relationships with their teachers and other learners. Learners demonstrate high levels of respectful behaviour towards their teachers and each other. They enjoy their studies and engage well with different learning activities. A high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications and move on to the next stage in their education.

Learners and apprentices develop their confidence while studying at the college. Adult learners on ESOL programmes, for example, learn how to write complete sentences and to speak confidently when talking to advisors in the job centre or when shopping in the supermarket. They are proud to develop the knowledge of English they need to help their children with homework and to engage with their local community.

Learners have suitable opportunities to develop their interests and talents at college. They participate in sports clubs and competitions and take part in fundraising activities and community events. Learners also undertake projects for employers and benefit from industry-related trips and trade events. For example, learners on art and design programmes, including those with high needs, benefit from relevant trips to museums and art galleries. On visits, they broaden their knowledge of artists' techniques, and this helps them to improve their own work.

Learners' attendance and punctuality is not consistently high. Leaders have put in place strategies to improve attendance, but these have not yet had enough impact. Too many learners do not attend their taught sessions often enough. In most cases, learners arrive promptly, well prepared to learn, and take part enthusiastically in lessons. However, in a few lessons, learners are late. This disrupts teaching, and learners are distracted.

Learners feel safe at the college. They appreciate the presence of security guards and safeguarding staff and know who to go to if they have a concern. They have confidence that leaders take issues such as bullying or harassment seriously and would deal with them quickly.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have worked effectively with local and regional stakeholders to ensure their curriculum matches the skills needs of local businesses and residents. They work with local colleges and universities to create suitable pathways for learners to progress to higher education programmes in areas where there are skills shortages. They have started to develop a Green Skills Hub and a Construction Centre to provide training in emerging technologies and techniques, such as retrofitting, to meet the green skills needs of the region.

Leaders recognise that learners' knowledge of English is a barrier to their gaining employment in key sectors such as health and social care. As a result, they have thoughtfully redesigned the content of some of their English courses to better prepare learners for employment in these sectors. For example, they have introduced tailored ESOL courses specifically for work in business, beauty, and health and social care.

Leaders have adapted subject curriculums to meet the needs of the communities they serve. For example, having recognised the need for qualified and trained clinical technicians and laboratory scientists in the National Health Service, they included units on biochemistry and radiography in their applied science courses. This has helped to bridge the skills gap in this area and to meet the workforce demands of local healthcare providers.

Despite useful links with employers, leaders do not ensure that employers are consistently involved in the design and teaching of their courses. In some areas, this is done well. For example, in business, arts and health, and social care, employers have selected units, worked with learners on role-play activities and visited as guest lecturers. However, in other subjects, employers do not have any input into what learners are taught. In childcare, for example, employers want more involvement to ensure that teachers teach techniques that reflect current workplace practices.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders offer courses that meet the needs and aspirations of their learners and of the local community. They offer a range of levels in each subject so that learners can progress to more challenging courses. For example, leaders have designed a wide range of art and design courses for young learners, which enables them to start as beginners and build their knowledge to become experts. Most young learners achieve their qualifications and progress well to more challenging levels of study.

On most courses, teachers plan effectively to teach new knowledge and skills so that learners build their understanding of their subject over time. For example, on sports courses for young learners, teachers first teach learners the foundation knowledge of human anatomy and physiology before moving on to the impact of exercise and a healthy lifestyle on our bodies. On study programmes in art and design, teachers cover a variety of skills, including drawing and sketching, during the first year. Consequently, learners develop a sound understanding of the core elements of art and design and have the knowledge they need to select a specialism in the second year.

Learners with high needs find their college to be an inclusive and welcoming place, where staff support them to learn effectively. Learners gain relevant knowledge, skills and professional behaviours, which helps them to move on to the next level of their education or employment. Most learners thrive and make progress in line with,

and in some cases ahead of, their peers. Learners achieve their qualifications well, and some win awards for their work. However, on foundation courses for learners with high needs, staff do not set clear and specific enough learning goals based on learners' education, health and care (EHC) plans. They do not support learners sufficiently well to develop the knowledge and skills they need to make progress beyond passing qualifications. Consequently, learners make slow progress in developing the skills and knowledge they need to live more independently.

Most teachers are highly qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach. In some courses, such as sports and beauty, teachers have current industry expertise, and some are practising professionals. They use their industry experience effectively to inform their teaching. For example, teachers of sport use their voice and body language skilfully to model current coaching techniques. As a result, learners develop coaching skills that prepare them well for the workplace.

Most teachers use effective strategies to teach learners new knowledge and skills. On beauty courses, teachers demonstrate techniques for different treatments step by step, questioning learners as the demonstration proceeds. In applied sciences, teachers make expert use of diagrams, experiments, and questions and answers to help young learners understand complex topics such as genetics and homeostasis. As a result, learners can accurately recall what they have been taught.

On apprenticeship programmes, teachers use their industry experience skilfully to teach apprentices the professional standards and behaviours essential for the health and social care sector. Teachers encourage apprentices to take part in professional conversations in their lessons. They help apprentices to remember new knowledge through clear explanations, regular recapping, and testing. As a result, apprentices become confident practitioners and are trusted to run activities, such as multidisciplinary meetings, in their care homes.

Leaders do not ensure that apprentices have suitable support for all parts of their apprenticeship. They do not ensure that apprentices have enough time or teaching to achieve the necessary qualifications in English or mathematics. Apprentices struggle to balance the demands of their studies with the demands of work in the health and social care sector. As a result, too many apprentices fail these qualifications and do not complete their apprenticeship.

Teachers' assessment of learners' understanding and the quality of feedback on learners' work varies. For example, in GCSE mathematics, teachers conduct regular mock examinations and provide learners with detailed feedback on any misconceptions and areas to improve. Learners use this feedback to improve their grades from one assessment to the next. However, in business lessons, teachers do not consistently correct learners' misunderstandings. They also do not provide sufficient feedback to learners on how to improve the quality of their academic writing. As a result, learners do not always know what they need to do to improve their work or to achieve the grades they need for their chosen next steps.

On most courses, learners' standard of work is good. In access to health and social care courses, teachers teach learners to produce coursework that is well presented and correctly referenced. This prepares them well for the demands of higher education. In study programmes such as beauty, sports, applied science and media, learners use appropriate technical terminology in discussions and in their written work. A high proportion of learners successfully progress to higher level courses and to university.

Leaders have put in place a thorough and well-structured weekly tutorial programme for learners, including adults and those with high needs. In sessions, staff teach learners a wide range of topics, including British values, mental health, healthy lifestyles and online safety. Most learners confidently recall what they have learned and feel well informed about issues that impact their lives.

Staff provide most learners with high-quality careers information, advice and guidance. For example, in business and art and design, learners enjoy hearing about subject-specific employment opportunities from guest speakers. On access courses, staff help adult learners to complete university applications and personal statements, and staff support learners with high needs to prepare for interviews through mock interview sessions. Learners on study programmes also undertake work experience linked to their areas of interest. However, in a minority of cases, such as in sports courses at satellite centres and GCSE mathematics, young learners do not have access to sufficiently detailed careers information, advice and guidance. Consequently, these learners do not have a clear idea of how to reach their desired next steps.

Leaders provide staff with relevant training to improve their practice. For example, staff take part in training on how to support learners with specific learning difficulties and conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Consequently, they learn to use different strategies, including pictures, coloured paper and technology, such as noise-cancelling headphones, to support learners in lessons.

In some cases, managers and curriculum leaders do not have a sufficient understanding or oversight of the curriculum areas they manage. They are not always aware of the improvement and action plans specific to their curriculum areas. As a result, they lack the confidence and knowledge to put in place plans to improve the quality of their teams' work.

Leaders and governors have effective oversight of the provision. Governors have relevant expertise in areas such as education, finance and safeguarding. They frequently visit the college and take part in learning walks and discussions with learners and staff. Governors are aware of the strengths and main areas for improvement in the curriculum. They provide robust challenge to leaders to improve the quality of education. As a result, leaders have taken suitable actions to improve their performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place robust policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of their learners. They have developed a strong safeguarding culture across the college.

Leaders provide staff with frequent safeguarding training and know their responsibilities to safeguard learners. They deal with safeguarding concerns, including concerns related to staff, appropriately and promptly.

The designated safeguarding lead and others responsible for safeguarding are well trained and experienced for their roles. They work closely with safeguarding officers at their satellite centres to maintain a thorough oversight of emerging concerns specific to different sites. They work closely with external stakeholders, including the London 'Prevent' coordinator and the local police, to make sure they know about local and regional risks.

Most learners have a sound understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They know how to keep themselves safe from these risks.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that learners' attendance and punctuality are consistently high.
- Leaders should ensure that learners with high needs on foundation courses have access to a suitable curriculum that meets the targets set in their individual EHC plans.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers in all subjects assess learners' understanding and provide high-quality feedback so that learners know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leaders should ensure that curriculum managers have an accurate oversight of their curriculum areas so that they are able to make improvements.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130440
Address	Elm Park Stanmore HA7 4BQ
Contact number	02084207700
Website	https://stanmore.ac.uk/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Annette Cast
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	31 January to 3 February 2017
Main subcontractors	Salon Hijab Blossom Beauty

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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