

Inspection of Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College (RHACC)

Inspection dates: 5 to 8 December 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College (RHACC) is an institute for adult learning operating from two main campuses, Parkshot and Hillcroft. RHACC was formed in October 2017 following the merger of Richmond Adult and Community College with Hillcroft College. At the time of the inspection, there were 5,152 learners across the two main sites and outreach venues.

At the time of the inspection, the Parkshot campus had 4,344 learners, 10 of whom were under the age of 19. Programmes are offered from entry level 1 to level 5 in a range of subjects. These include English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), art and design, access to higher education (access to HE), counselling, and accounting and finance. Specific programmes are taught for adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The Hillcroft campus had 513 learners. Most learners study programmes in arts, media and publishing, health, public services and care, information and communication technology, and preparation for life and work.

A further 147 learners study at outreach venues, and 148 study online. RHACC does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Learners arrive at a welcoming environment in which staff celebrate their achievements. For example, there are prominent displays of learners' artwork in the communal areas. Learners enjoy studying at the college, and the vast majority would recommend it.

Learners value their time at the college, and they take part in their lessons enthusiastically. Learners arrive promptly; they are well prepared, and their attendance is good. Teachers provide effective support to the few learners who are unable to attend. For example, in mathematics, teachers make sure that, if learners miss lessons, they receive resources and assignments via a communication platform to help them catch up. As a result, the majority of learners make good progress while studying at the college.

Most learners quickly develop new skills and knowledge and produce work that is of a good standard. For example, in jewellery making, learners are proud of how their work improves over time and are eager to talk about how they have developed as artists. Access to HE learners quickly learn to carry out research and reference the sources they have used. They swiftly apply these skills to their academic writing.

Learners receive effective careers information, advice and guidance. For example, careers staff visit ESOL lessons and signpost learners to careers events and further support. Learners wishing to progress to university receive effective personal statement tutorials and support with applications from local university admissions teams. As a result, most learners are well prepared for, and are clear about, the progression routes available to them at the end of their courses.

Learners are friendly and polite to one another and to staff and visitors. Learners are very supportive to each other when in class and form strong friendship groups. Many learners who are returning to education quickly develop confidence and a real sense of pride in the work they produce. For example, in art and design, learners display their work at private shows and the college.

Learners feel safe at college. They enjoy learning in a supportive environment that is free of bullying and harassment. Learners know to whom they can report any concerns they may have, and they feel comfortable doing so.

Too few learners take part in extra-curricular sessions, trips or experiences beyond their main programme of study. As a result, learners do not benefit from opportunities to pursue their wider talents and interests.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Senior leaders work well with a wide range of stakeholders to understand the skills priorities for adults in the local areas. This includes small and medium enterprises,

voluntary and community organisations, other local educational providers, and local business partnerships. Leaders play an active role in several skills-related boards, such as the South London Partnership and the local chamber of commerce, where they establish and develop strong working relationships with their partners and contribute to shaping the local offer. For example, college leaders worked very effectively with a bicycle repairs employer to plan, resource and teach new courses in bicycle repairs, to meet the current need for trained mechanics in bicycle servicing and repairs.

Leaders and governors have a clear rationale for the local priority areas they have chosen to focus on, as well as for those they have chosen not to focus on. Leaders and managers in most curriculum areas plan and teach a curriculum that contributes to meeting skills needs in these areas. For example, leaders offer a fast-track route to qualify as counsellors, to meet the increasing demand for trained counsellors following the pandemic. They offer a supported route to make sure learners with additional needs can continue in education.

Leaders and managers do not involve external stakeholders in the planning and teaching of the curriculum consistently enough across all areas. In areas such as supported learning, mathematics and accountancy, the involvement of external stakeholders is limited. In digital skills, leaders amend the curriculum effectively in response to feedback from the industry panels they have established.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for their learners. They work very effectively with local providers to minimise duplication. They focus on preparing learners for employment or further study, improving essential skills, health and well-being, and developing stronger communities.

Teachers plan their curriculums in a logical order. For example, ESOL learners start by learning vocabulary before moving on to pronunciation and grammar. Level 2 counselling learners first learn the critical underpinning skills of counselling, such as active listening, before moving on to compassionate listening and advanced questioning skills. As a result, learners develop skills and knowledge in their subjects incrementally over time.

Teachers are suitably qualified. They use their skills and knowledge effectively to plan and teach activities that help learners recall and apply their new skills and knowledge. In finance sessions, teachers use case studies effectively to help learners apply what they learn in a business context. For example, reviewing financial ratios at a large high street department store enables learners to identify problem areas and how to tackle them. In supported learning, catering teachers provide demonstrations at each stage of the baking process when making gingerbread biscuits. Learners follow these stages precisely, remember their new skills and knowledge and use them competently during lessons.

In most cases, teachers use the results of assessments at the start of the course well to understand what learners know and can do at the start of their training. For example, in mathematics, teachers use assessment well to establish learners' starting points and where they have strengths or gaps in their prior learning. Teachers adapt their teaching and assignments accordingly to support learners in their areas of weakness and challenge them in their areas of strength. However, leaders and teachers have not developed a thorough process to check learners' starting points for learners with additional needs on programmes that do not lead to an external qualification. As a result, teachers do not always set learners appropriate learning plans. For example, they include activities that learners can already do.

Teachers do not set consistently challenging and appropriate targets for learners. When teachers set targets well, they do this together with learners. They set aspirational targets and review these frequently to make sure learners are on track to achieve their goals. However, too often, teachers set targets that are not helpful enough for learners. For example, in art and design programmes, targets are not challenging enough. As a result, learners do not always know how to improve their work.

Teachers use a variety of assessment methods well to check learners' understanding. For example, in advanced French conversation classes, tutors use questioning, songs and repetition to help learners retain new vocabulary and complex grammar in their memories. In access to HE classes, teachers ask learners to share their research with the group. They use questioning effectively to check that learners have fully understood the topic. Teachers adapt their questions to support learners, when needed. Most learners make substantial progress, and the vast majority go on to achieve their qualifications successfully.

Learners who need extra help receive effective support to develop independence and practise new skills. Learning support workers in mathematics prompt learners to use number tables when they need extra help with their multiplication tables. In pre-entry ESOL, support staff encourage learners to use mini whiteboards to help them practise spelling or letter formation. As a result, learners with additional needs participate enthusiastically, develop new skills and knowledge in lessons, and most make expected progress.

Leaders have put in place effective professional development activities for teachers and managers. Leaders have targeted training for individuals and teams in specific areas such as assessment practice. For example, access to HE staff attend training on assessment design, supporting learners to achieve high grades, and effective transition of learners from level 2 to level 3 programmes. Teachers have adapted their assessment methods and the feedback they provide so that learners are clear about how to improve their work. The number of learners achieving higher grades for assignments is increasing.

Governors have good oversight of the provision. They are well informed by senior leaders about the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders have effective processes in place to monitor and improve the quality of the provision they

teach. Leaders have created an accurate self-assessment and a quality improvement plan that identifies strengths and checks progress against areas for improvement. For example, leaders have provided significant development and training for staff in the supported learning area, which is beginning to have a positive impact.

Leaders and managers are considerate of the workload and well-being of staff. Staff benefit from frequent one to ones with their managers, which they find helpful and supportive. Leaders provide access to a confidential well-being service, and staff can attend a free leisure course at the college. As a result, staff feel well supported in managing their workload and well-being.

Governors contribute positively and provide effective challenge to the senior leadership team. For example, the board has appointed a link governor for the supported learning provision to monitor the quality improvement plan for this area. Governors use effective strategies to make sure they understand the views of learners. They hold focus groups with learners and visit classes to ensure they have first-hand knowledge of what it is like to be a learner.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure that teachers set learners targets that make it clear what they need to do to improve their work, and ensure that these targets are reviewed frequently.
- Make sure that, in the supported learning area, teachers accurately assess learners' starting points so that they are able to identify what learners already know and set them relevant targets.
- Offer a broader range of extra-curricular activities and make sure that learners are informed about them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133053
Address	Parkshot Richmond TW9 2RE
Contact number	020 8891 5907
Website	www.rhacc.ac.uk
Principal	Gabrielle Flint
Provider type	Specialist Designated Institution
Date of previous inspection	14 to 17 January 2020
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, 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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