

The Henley College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Information about the provider

1. The Henley College is a large college on two sites on the outskirts of the historic riverside town centre of Henley-on-Thames in south Oxfordshire. Its strategic aim is to be the premier sixth form centre for south Oxfordshire and the adjacent areas of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Until September 2010 the college was a tertiary college, but has been re-designated as a sixth form college.
2. The college offers education and training mainly to young people aged 16 to 19. Around 90% of these students are on advanced level courses. The GCSE results of students starting on these courses are broadly in line with the sixth form college average, but the proportion with below average GCSE qualifications is increasing. Recruitment is from approximately a hundred schools, including four partner schools in south Oxfordshire, and has continued to show a steady rise over the years. Demand for places is high. Some 10% of students are from Henley-on-Thames. The proportion of the college's students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in the local population.
3. The provision includes over 40 GCE AS-level and A-level subjects. Around one third of all students studying at advanced level are on vocational programmes, such as BTEC national diplomas. The college is the only one in the area to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB). The foundation level offer has courses for students at different stages of development, including 'Pathways' provision for students with severe and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An additional element in the range of course opportunities is the 'Sports Development Programme' in a number of sports, with links to major professional clubs and an opportunity for students to gain coaching awards.
4. In 2008/09 the largest of the college's subject areas was science and mathematics, accounting for around 20% of students aged 16 to 18. Visual and performing arts; languages, literature and culture; and preparation for life and work each accounted for around 15% of provision.
5. The college, through its 'Henley Training Company' (HTC), provides work-based learning opportunities, in particular in childcare and hairdressing, working with around 150 employers located in the Thames Valley area.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	33 part-time learners
Further education (16 to18)	1,911 full-time learners 31 part-time learners
Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	37 full-time learners 42 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	60 full-time learners 419 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	300 learners
Apprenticeships	223 apprentices

Summary report

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

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

Subject Areas	
Mathematics	3
Science	3
Performing arts and music	2
Visual arts and media	2

Overall effectiveness

- This is a good college with good capacity to improve. Outcomes for learners are good overall; but in two of the subject areas inspected they are satisfactory. Correctly, the college sees as a top priority the improvement needed to the level of students' progress on advanced level courses, compared to their results at GCSE. Students feel safe in the college as a result of good arrangements for safeguarding. They enjoy their time at college and their attendance is high. The college equips them well for their futures in further study or employment.
- The quality of lessons varies both across the college and within subject areas. This too is an important issue for the college to rectify. Inspectors observed some outstanding lessons, demonstrating that there are very high standards in teaching and learning to be shared. However, the sharing of this practice needs to accelerate and extend to all areas of the college. Arrangements to observe the quality of lessons are not yet focused sufficiently on students' learning and progress.

8. Students benefit from detailed and helpful feedback on the quality of their work, but targets to help students improve their performance and meet or exceed their target grades often lack clarity; their use is not sufficiently systematic to drive up levels of learners' progress.
9. The degree to which the provision meets the needs and interests of students, potential students and employers is outstanding. The range of courses at all levels is extremely relevant to students' long-term goals, and the college is particularly flexible in meeting employers' needs.
10. Good leadership and management and governance have set out demanding plans for improvement supported by re-designation as a sixth form college. Quality assurance is good, but at subject level the critical evaluation of their work and the focus of plans for improvement fall short of the standard achieved for the college as a whole.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The rate of improvement in success rates since the last inspection has been strong. Pass rates on AS-level and A-level courses compare well with those in sixth form colleges. However, students on advanced level courses make only the expected progress from their prior attainment, and their progress across the range of subjects is inconsistent.
- Students feel safe around the college and work safely in practical activities. They enjoy their time at the college and their attendance is high.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, although the quality of both varies widely across the college, and within subject areas.
- Teachers provide detailed and helpful feedback on students' work. However, the targets to help students improve their performance and fulfil their potential often lack clarity; their use is not sufficiently systematic to drive up levels of learners' progress.
- Records of teaching and learning observations have improved since the last inspection but need to focus more clearly on how well students learn and make progress. Internal grading of lessons is sometimes overgenerous. Continuing professional development (CPD) is readily available to staff, but the good practice in teaching and learning needs to be spread across the college further and faster.
- Additional learning support needs are identified early and one-to-one support is good. A detailed explanation of the most suitable approaches to learning for the individual student are explored and agreed. All staff share this information effectively and use it well to inform lesson planning.
- The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students, and potential students, is outstanding. A wide range of courses at all levels are highly relevant to students' long term personal and educational goals. The college's programme for gifted and talented students is successful in motivating more able students.

- The college's extensive partnership working with local schools and business is highly successful in meeting a very wide range of students' and employers' needs.
- Group tutorial provision is satisfactory. A whole-college approach to the teaching of a standard programme is a recent development and the quality of tutorials remains inconsistent.
- Not enough students are directly involved in decision-making related to academic matters and they feel more confident using their parents to voice concerns related to aspects of teaching and learning.
- Leaders and managers raise expectations effectively and promote ambition throughout the organisation, as demonstrated by the re-designation as a sixth form college. Targets set to improve the college's performance are demanding.
- Governors provide strong leadership, direction and challenge through well-structured committees and the main board. Their expertise contributes well to shaping the educational character of the college. They have a clear understanding of their role and are well informed about the performance of the college.
- Self-assessment considers a wide range of evidence. The cross-college self-assessment report is well focused and evaluative. However, subject area self-assessment reports are insufficiently effective in evaluating the provision and in setting focused actions for improvement.
- Almost all groups of students achieve well. However, actions to raise lower success rates amongst a small number of students have been slow. The college promotes equality and diversity adequately; reports to governors on equality lack sufficient detail.

What does The Henley College need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen arrangements to share good practice in teaching and learning more quickly and effectively in order to raise the quality of lessons to match the highest standards seen in the college.
- Ensure that internal lesson observations focus more effectively on how well students learn and make progress.
- Set and use systematically for all students targets and target grades that help students to raise their aspirations and fulfil their potential.
- Implement fully plans for developing consistent high quality in group tutorial provision by identifying and sharing existing good practice, and by placing the monitoring and support of individual students at the heart of all the college's activities.
- Promote equality and diversity more extensively through themed events in tutorials and work-based learning reviews, so that all learners are equipped better for life in a diverse society; ensure swifter action to rectify underperformance by any group of learners; ensure that reports to governors about equality are sufficiently detailed.

- Involve students more closely in the review and evaluation of the college's work and, in particular, in the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Develop managers' understanding and skills in the analysis and evaluation of performance in their areas of responsibility and in planning for improvement.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- how well the range of courses meet their needs and the flexibility to choose vocational pathways on the BTEC provision
- the quality of teaching and training and the quality of individual support from tutors
- opportunities to exercise freedom and develop independence within a supportive and friendly environment of mutual respect
- the wide range of enrichment opportunities
- the quality of resources on LearnZone, the college's virtual learning environment (VLE)
- the support available for application to higher education
- the programme for gifted and talented students
- help for those students for whom English is a second or other language
- learning while working.

What learners would like to see improved:

- opportunities for work experience
- the amount of social space
- greater consistency in the quality of tutorial hour
- access to library and information learning technology (ILT) facilities
- greater clarity around target setting and progress
- the poor lighting along the access road to the Rotherfield site.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the high standards of training provided
- the high calibre of students sent for work placements
- the college's flexible approach to training that fits employers' and their employees' work patterns
- good communication with the college and high levels of support by trainers
- in-depth analysis of their training needs, and the care the college takes to fit training closely to their requirements

- the beneficial impact of the training on the efficiency and effectiveness of the business
- how well training builds learners' confidence and self-esteem
- good links between the training provided at work and that carried out by the college
- being involved in reviewing learners' progress.

What employers would like to see improved:

- opportunities for learners to complete work using ILT
- the content and accessibility of some learning materials.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

11. Capacity to improve is good. Success rates have improved strongly since the last inspection. The college has resolved key areas for improvement from the last inspection in the form of much improved outcomes for adult learners and high success rates in key skills. However, other issues from the last inspection remain works in progress, such as the precision and focus on learning in lesson observation, and the quality of target-setting for students.
12. Targets for improvement are demanding and the college's re-designation as a sixth form college is a demonstration of the successfully shared drive to improve the quality of provision. Pass rates in AS- and A-level qualifications compare well with the higher sixth form college national averages. The overall self-assessment report for the college is an accurate and self-critical reflection of the college's key strengths and areas for development, although at subject area level self-assessment and improvement planning do not match the high standards set in the overall report. Interventions to raise performance in a number of areas have been very effective. However, in other aspects of the college's performance, such as the progress learners make on advanced level courses and the quality of provision in science and mathematics, the college is making slow progress. The college provides good value for money.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Outcomes for learners are good. The rate of improvement in success rates since the last inspection has been significant. Some two thirds of students on advanced level courses take GCE AS- or A-levels. Success rates in these have been above the national averages for general further education and tertiary colleges in each of the last four years. Pass rates are at the high sixth form college national averages. Students on advanced level courses make satisfactory progress compared to their prior attainment. However, significant variations exist between subjects in the proportion of students who meet or exceed their minimum target grades. The college recognises as a key challenge the improvement of students' progress.
14. Success rates for the small proportion of students aged 16 to 18 at foundation and intermediate level and for the small numbers of adults in learner responsive provision were all above average in 2009/10. Success rates for learners on vocational programmes at level 3 are in line overall with national averages, but with a range of performance across the qualifications offered.
15. Learners' outcomes in work-based learning are good. Overall success rates for apprentices were well above average in 2008/09. Timely success rates in Train to Gain were broadly in line with the national average in 2008/09, but improving in-year in 2009/10. Learners make good progress as a result of well-

coordinated on- and off-the job training. The development of learners' personal and vocational skills and knowledge is good.

16. Both male and female students, and those receiving additional learning support, achieve well. Students from most minority ethnic groups have above average success rates. A small number of minority ethnic students have lower success rates than the college average, but most achieve their qualifications very well.
17. Students enjoy lesson activities and college life, and their attendance is high. Students feel safe around the college as a result of good arrangements for safeguarding, and they work safely in practical activities.
18. Students enjoy their time at The Henley College and benefit from the particularly wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available to them. Opportunities for all students to participate in sporting activities are excellent and ensure girls at risk of not taking any physical activity have a range and choice of non-competitive activities. There is a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles. Good attention is paid to preparing students for their futures, whether they are progressing to higher education, further education, work, or training. Students contribute well to the community and are involved in a wide range of voluntary, community and charitable activities both within and outside the college. This is supported by an enthusiastic student union.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

19. Teaching and learning are good, although the quality of both varies quite widely across the college and within curriculum areas. While much of the teaching is good or at least satisfactory, this variation is an important issue that the college's quality assurance process has yet to tackle effectively.
20. A significant minority of lessons are outstanding and show the teachers' skills at their best. They present challenges to students that capture their attention, stimulate and motivate them, and drive their learning forward well. These lessons can be found across the college and examples observed show that there is excellent exposition practice in history; well balanced care and challenge for students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD) on the 'Pathways' course; excellent and rapid skills development in performing arts; and, some very effective development of students' evaluative skills in mathematics.
21. As a counterpoint to this outstanding work, inspectors also observed a small number of inadequate lessons. In these lessons, students were not challenged sufficiently well and did not make the progress that they should have done. The pace of lessons was often a problem, with teachers either going too fast, so that some students could not keep up or, more commonly, too slowly, so that students lost interest and became bored. The college has identified a need to improve the quality of teachers' questioning techniques; inspection has confirmed this as an issue to be rectified. Their survey responses show that

students feel that some of their lessons need to have a wider range of activities to make them more interesting.

22. Assessment is good. Students' work is marked fairly and usually has detailed and helpful feedback from the teacher. In performing arts, this is especially well developed. Internal verification maintains standards well. Students report that some of their work is not returned promptly enough. The college has taken steps to rectify this issue. Targets to help students improve their performance and fulfil their potential often lack clarity; their use is not sufficiently systematic to drive up levels of learners' progress.
23. In many areas, staff have paid good attention to making sure that their accommodation helps learning. There is some very good use of display of relevant posters and students work. This is especially good in history classrooms, but is also evident in the Pathways rooms and in the newly opened 'Hot Frog Café', which provides an excellent work environment for students with SLDD. However, some art and music rooms have poor temperature control and are too cold.
24. Teachers have interactive whiteboards in most classrooms, but teachers and students both report a need to improve access to computers in classrooms and in the student learning centre (SLC) and library. There are some excellent examples of effective use of the VLE to support learning, but use of this system, and the quality and quantity of the resources on it, vary across the college.
25. Records of internal lesson observations have improved since the last inspection, but they focus too much on teachers' and students' activities and not enough on how much students learn and make progress. Inspection evidence suggests that the college's approach to grading teaching and learning is too generous. The support to teachers from advanced practitioners is good, and teachers value the range of staff development opportunities. However, more effective approaches to spreading good practice across the college are needed.
26. Initial assessment is thorough and ensures that students are placed on the most suitable courses for their needs, abilities and interests. Comprehensive and detailed referral processes examine thoroughly potential barriers to learning and motivation. Additional learning support needs are identified early and one-to-one support is good. A detailed explanation of the most suitable approaches to learning for the individual student are explored and agreed. All staff share the learning strategies agreed and this informs lesson planning effectively. Students in receipt of additional support achieve at least as well as their peers. In work-based learning, initial assessment does not identify systematically all learners' individual training and support needs at the start of their programme, although these learners make good progress overall.
27. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students, and potential students is outstanding. It has developed a wide range of courses at all levels including a foundation level offer, 'Pathways' provision for students

with profound and complex learning needs, and the International Baccalaureate, all of which are highly relevant to students' long-term personal and educational goals. The college has developed a successful gifted and talented programme to motivate more able students and attracts to this programme a significant number of high-calibre sports students.

28. The college's extensive partnership working is highly successful in meeting a very wide range of student and employer needs. The college works closely with schools, partners and employers to ensure that provision meets local priorities. Employers value the flexibility of training and assessment to fit their working patterns and the care taken to identify and meet their training needs. Arrangements for students to make the transition from school are strong.
29. The college seeks to place the students at the centre of all aspects of its work. Students' views are collected and analysed routinely. The principal and senior management meet formally with students throughout the year to provide an opportunity to discuss issues of concern and actions result from these meetings. However, students are not involved directly in decision making related to academic matters and they feel more confident using parents to raise concerns related to aspects of teaching and learning.
30. Care, guidance and support are good. The college offers a wide range of support to students and has well-developed links with external referral agencies. The provision for group tutorials is satisfactory. More recent developments include a whole-college approach to the teaching of a standard programme for group tutorials and the use of materials to promote and reinforce Every Child Matters themes, and equality and diversity. The college plans to monitor the quality of tutorials through observations and checking documentation. Managers acknowledge that this process is less well-developed for tutorials than for other lesson observations, and that a more detailed analysis of key findings would be valuable in sharing best practice and ensuring greater consistency across the college.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

31. Leadership and management are good. Managers are successful in promoting ambition to raise standards and improve provision. Targets to improve performance are demanding. Staff at all levels are fully aware of the college's goal to be a top-performing institution. The restructured middle management tier provides improved coherence and a stronger focus on pastoral and academic support for students. The principal and senior managers work individually with high-performing students and those causing concern. Formal arrangements with partner colleges focus clearly on raising expectations through reciprocal inspections of subject areas. The college works informally with a number of other institutions to share good practice.
32. Governors provide very effective leadership and direction to shape the educational character of the college. They have a clear understanding of their role and are well informed about the performance of the college.

33. Feedback from key stakeholders is analysed systematically and used effectively to improve provision. Feedback from employers during regular contact with work-based learning staff leads to improvements such as increased flexibility in assessment arrangements. The principal holds frequent meetings with students' union officers to discuss concerns and obtain views on college life. Students participate regularly in focus groups, and other meetings in programme areas. Managers analyse this feedback carefully and incorporate the findings into the self-assessment process. However, inspectors of subject areas report that managers make insufficient use of students' views to inform and improve the quality of provision.
34. Quality assurance is good, and success rates have improved considerably since the last inspection. The quality assurance system is well considered and takes appropriate account of many sources of evidence. However, lesson observation requires greater precision and has not rectified the variation in teaching seen in the inspection. In work-based learning, the observation of learners' progress reviews and induction is underdeveloped. The cross-college self-assessment report is focused, detailed and evaluative with thorough analysis of student performance data. However, subject area self-assessment reports are insufficiently evaluative, in particular of teaching and learning. These reports do not always identify areas for improvement or link concerns to appropriate actions. Data analysis at subject level does not consider students' performance by ethnicity or the effect of additional learning support. Effective intervention by the senior leadership team has led to improved performance in a number of areas. The performance of all areas is reviewed systematically midway through the year. Curriculum managers do not always have sufficiently well-developed skills to ensure that self-assessment and actions for improvement are effective means of driving up the quality of provision. The quality of provision in mathematics and science has been slow to improve. Quality assurance in work-based learning is satisfactory. The self-assessment structure used does not accommodate fully the nature of the provision in this area. There is insufficient focus on the range of subject areas and insufficient coverage of aspects of the Common Inspection Framework.
35. Arrangements to promote the safeguarding of learners are good. A comprehensive central record contains appropriate details relating to staff. Safeguarding and anti-bullying policies are clear and well considered. Students know how to obtain help if needed. Bullying at college is rare and incidents are dealt with promptly. Close working between the college and external agencies helps to ensure student safety. Staff and governors have received appropriate training. Accidents are monitored carefully and investigated fully, but near misses are not recorded. Risk assessments are good and procedures for educational visits are robust.
36. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college provides a harmonious and respectful environment for learners and staff. Well-targeted marketing and partnerships have increased the proportion of minority ethnic students. A good range of courses and enrichment activities are provided for

students of all abilities and both genders from entry to advanced level. Entry level students benefit from real work experience at a new cafe. Gifted and talented students receive well-targeted support and an enhanced curriculum to extend their learning.

37. Senior managers interrogate data thoroughly on the performance of particular groups of students, but actions to improve the low retention of Pakistani students have been slow. Activities to raise students' awareness of equality and diversity are embedded in many subjects, but they are at an early stage of development in a minority of areas. The coverage of equality and diversity in tutorials, cross-college activities or during work-based learning reviews is insufficient. A detailed single equality scheme is in place, but action planning for improvements is underdeveloped. All staff and most governors have been trained in equality and diversity. Reports to governors are not sufficiently detailed.
38. Accommodation and resources for learning are attractive and of good quality, but there are insufficient social spaces for students. The strategy for sustainability is considered carefully in order to reduce the carbon footprint of the college whenever possible. The college strives to conserve energy and recycle. Value for money is good, evidenced by learners' good outcomes.

Subject areas

Mathematics

Grade 3

Context

39. Around 75 students are studying GCSE mathematics. Almost 200 students study AS-level mathematics, about 40 of whom take the 'Use Of Mathematics' qualification, and 85 students study A-level mathematics. Some 40 students take a double mathematics course comprising A-levels in mathematics and further mathematics. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and are in full-time study, but there is one evening class for GCSE mathematics which includes mainly older learners.

Key findings

- Students' outcomes are satisfactory. Pass rates in A-level mathematics and further mathematics are high. Students achieve good grades and many progress to relevant university courses. Students on double mathematics courses show strong problem-solving skills and a quick, confident command of algebraic techniques.
- Pass rates are poor in GCSE mathematics, where most students start with a prior grade D but fail to achieve a C within a year. Success rates at AS-level are low, with fewer than 70% of students completing the course successfully in 2010. At AS- and A-level, middle-ability students do not make the progress, on average, that similarly qualified students do nationally.
- Attendance and punctuality are good on most courses, but are unsatisfactory in GCSE classes.
- On advanced courses, students are well behaved, highly motivated and keen to learn. They are industrious and work well together, courteous and respectful of each others' contributions, supporting each other's learning cooperatively. Many use their free time well, for example attending additional workshops.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of resources, including ICT hardware and graphical software, to enliven learning and enable students to visualise mathematical processes and patterns. Students write answers on mini-whiteboards and hold them up to allow teachers to check understanding at a glance.
- However, a minority of lessons are poorly planned, resulting in insufficient challenge for some students, a narrow range of learning activities and inadequate teaching of key concepts. Lessons are slow and unexciting, and teachers do not check students' understanding systematically.
- In several lessons observed in this inspection, teachers explained mathematical techniques without ensuring understanding of underlying concepts and appreciation of when and why the methods might be used. As a result, students' understanding was superficial and fragile. In one lesson, for example,

students put the steps of a method into correct order without any understanding of those steps or their purpose.

- Classroom accommodation is good and includes a suite of computers. Students make good use of this facility to conduct mathematical investigations, such as one observed task where students explored the features of polynomial curves.
- Able mathematicians thrive at the college. They have many opportunities to extend and challenge themselves through further mathematics studies, participation in competitions, visits and lectures, the extended project, and the college's gifted and talented programme. Several mathematicians at A-level run workshops for students on AS-level courses.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory. At A-level, teachers set homework regularly and return it in a timely fashion. Feedback is of variable quality, but in the better cases it includes specific advice for improvements. Student progress is tracked effectively, and those identified as at risk of failure are advised to attend support workshops. At GCSE, some teachers set too little homework, and students frequently do not complete it.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. New subject area management is in place, and there is now a clear understanding of the key issues that need rectifying to improve student achievement. Appropriate and well-considered plans are in place to improve course management and to share teaching materials and approaches. The teaching team is keen to develop and improve their practice, but strategies employed thus far have not been sufficiently incisive or effective.
- Self-assessment is self-critical but draws upon an overly-generous interpretation of teaching and learning. Analysis of performance data is insufficient, and teachers and managers make little comparison of the progress of different groups of students. There has been insufficient focus or urgency in plans to improve the inadequate GCSE provision. Annual self-assessment reflects accurately the views of students, but teachers and managers do not use these to make timely improvements.

What does The Henley College need to do to improve further?

- Prioritise the improvement of the GCSE provision. Establish initial diagnostic assessments to facilitate the tailoring of teaching to students' needs. Provide shorter, intensive courses for those students close to C-grade standard. Monitor attendance, homework completion, and students' progress carefully and provide appropriate intervention and support mechanisms.
- Provide more effective support for teachers in developing and improving classroom practice. This should include more frequent team meetings to share and discuss teaching and learning and the use of mentors and coaches to engender a more structured approach to lesson preparation. Plans to improve teaching and learning should place particular emphasis on the use of assessment, including questioning in the classroom, to improve learning and conceptual understanding.

- Ensure that in-course reviews of student progress extend beyond those students at risk of failure; progress reviews should be regular and trigger robust intervention strategies for students who are underachieving relative to their minimum target grades.
- Establish in self-assessment a careful and sophisticated analysis of value-added data to identify patterns of underachievement, differences in student groups and a qualitative evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning.
- Increase the frequency, usage and profile of student views to identify areas for improvement in students' experience of college during their course.

Science

Grade 3

Context

40. All of the science provision is at advanced level. The college offers A-levels in biology, chemistry, geology, human biology, physics and psychology; and the International Baccalaureate (IB) in biology, chemistry, physics and psychology. There are 795 enrolments at AS- and A-level. Biology is more popular than chemistry or physics. Well over one third of enrolments are in psychology, making it the college's most popular science course.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners in science are satisfactory overall but present an inconsistent picture. Success rates are around sixth form college average in the majority of courses at advanced level, with the exception of A-level biology, where they are above average, and AS-level human biology, where they are below average. The pass rate in AS-level chemistry in 2009/10 was below average.
- High grade achievement is good in A-level biology, A-level chemistry and AS-level geology. It was below the national average in AS-level and A-level human biology, AS-level chemistry, AS-level physics and A-level psychology in 2009/10.
- Students' progress compared to their prior attainment is satisfactory, but is inconsistent across the range of courses. It is good in AS-level psychology and A-level biology. Students' progress in A-level chemistry improved and was satisfactory in 2009/10, but in AS-level chemistry their progress was inadequate.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with a significant minority of lessons being good. In the better lessons, students participate well and are confident. In these lessons, appropriate aims and good quality resources promote learning successfully. In other lessons, opportunities for learners to play a more active role in the lesson are not taken up. There is a lack of targeted support for less able learners and a lack of challenge for more able learners.
- The assessment of students' work is satisfactory overall. In biology and psychology feedback to students is good and teachers use cover sheets particularly effectively to give students targets to improve. However, in chemistry and physics, there is not enough focus on setting students specific targets to improve.
- The science materials on the college's virtual learning environment are outstanding. Learners make good use of the materials and find that they support their learning very well.
- Partnerships with local schools, employers and higher education institutions are good. Science tutors work with their counterparts in local schools to ensure a smooth transition for students from school to college. Students enjoy the

opportunities that they have to work with local universities. Students on the IB gain wider skills from carrying out voluntary work in the community.

- Support for learners in science is satisfactory. Students have a range of subject-specific support workshops, for example mathematics for physicists. The students who attend these workshops appreciate them, but not enough students attend them.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. New managers in the area have devised appropriate strategies to secure improvement through the use of advanced teacher practitioners, the increased involvement of students in lessons through planned student activities and the trialling of initiatives on personal target-setting. However, it is too early to judge the effects of these interventions.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Teachers in biology and psychology make good use of opportunities to promote positive role models in science. Managers analyse students' performance by gender and look to close any achievement gaps, but they do not yet do this analysis by ethnicity.
- Self-assessment in science is satisfactory in improving the quality of provision. Managers have identified well-considered strategies to share good practice and to improve outcomes for students. However, over the last three years, progress to improve outcomes on weaker-performing courses has been slow.
- Teachers make effective use of resources in science. Laboratory accommodation is good, and laboratories are well equipped.

What does The Henley College need to do to improve further?

- Enable students to make better progress in chemistry and physics by improving the quality of feedback and target setting on marked work.
- Ensure that those students identified to attend additional subject specific workshops make full use of these opportunities that these workshops provide them.
- Monitor and review regularly the strategies in place to improve teaching, learning and outcomes for students, so that overall performance improves on weaker courses.
- Extend the analysis of students' performance to include analysis by ethnicity. Improve the consistency of promotion of equality and diversity by sharing the good practice found in biology.

Performing arts and music

Grade 2

Context

41. Some 165 students attend a range of full-time courses at intermediate and advanced level including vocational courses and AS- and A-level courses in performing arts, drama and theatre studies, and dance. In addition, some 57 students study A-level music and music technology. Of the 222 students in total, most are female; almost all are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Pass rates are high for most learners and success rates are mostly above average. Students on full-time programmes in performing arts achieve well, as do students on A-level courses in music, music technology and drama. In 2009/10, the proportion of students achieving high grades improved and was satisfactory. With the exception of AS-level drama, retention rates on most AS-level programmes and in A-level dance have remained low for three years.
- The majority of students who complete their studies progress to further study, often securing places at prestigious universities and drama schools. A small minority of students progress directly into employment, some in the creative industries. In 2009/10 most students made satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment.
- Students achieve good practical, technical and theoretical skills and understanding. Students on vocational courses demonstrate a good and realistic understanding of professional practice. Students on A-level courses use theory well to enhance their performance, interpretive and compositional skills. All students work with confidence and communicate their creative ideas very well with their peers and teachers. Most students' literacy and communication skills and critical evaluation skills are good.
- Students demonstrate a highly professional approach to their work. Behaviour is outstanding and students work with enthusiasm and commitment to their studies. Students cooperate very well and work respectfully with their teachers and peers. They demonstrate considerable maturity during rehearsals and discussions with their peers and teachers. Student attendance and punctuality are outstanding on most courses and improved across the area in 2009/10.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers set very high expectations. They have particularly good subject expertise which they use increasingly well to plan a coherent series of lessons and to enrich subject development. In most lessons students make good progress. Teachers use a good range of activities and resources to maintain learners' interest. Teachers respond to students' needs through helpful one-to-one support. Resources are well maintained and generally fit for purpose.
- In many lessons, teaching and learning activities and planned learning outcomes take insufficient account of individual students' prior knowledge and

abilities. In a minority of lessons, all students do the same tasks and significant numbers of students are not challenged sufficiently by the pace or level of the work. Rarely do teachers adapt learning resources and task goals to meet different needs and abilities. In some lessons, teachers' questioning does not probe sufficiently to develop higher-order thinking skills.

- Assessment is rigorous and frequent. Students are diligent in completing the regularly set homework; teachers' regular feedback to students helps them to improve their work and grades. Students often learn very well from each other through well-facilitated peer critique and assessment. However, in a minority of lessons, key learning points are often not shared sufficiently, consolidated or recorded. Assessment feedback does not always celebrate students' achievement.
- Learning targets and the monitoring of students' progress as a result of individual student reviews or tutorials are not always sufficiently thorough, recorded or formalised to ensure students and teachers fully understand the steps required to improve. There are insufficient formal opportunities for students to explore and develop their goals and aspirations at the beginning of their studies to aid their progress.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Subject leadership is good. Many courses show improvements in students' progress from their prior attainment and in the proportion of high grades achieved as a result of teachers' strong focus on the quality of lessons. However, the improvement of some low retention rates on AS-level courses has been slow and there is too much variation in the quality of students' experience on these courses.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The promotion of cultural diversity through the curriculum is good, but there are few opportunities in teaching and learning for students to develop their understanding of discrimination. Managers have identified correctly that some male students do not achieve as well as their peers, and they are making appropriate interventions, but they do not monitor the progress of other student groups.
- Self-assessment and quality improvement planning have been slow to make sustained improvements to the provision. The self-assessment process has identified some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in inspection. However, the evaluation of teaching and learning is weak and insufficiently self-critical. Quality improvement planning and target setting lack rigour in rectifying poor performance.
- Lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning and students' progress. Where good practice is evident, it is not shared systematically across subject teams. Staff development does not link consistently to course improvement priorities. Managers make insufficient use of learners' views to identify good practice and secure improvements.

What does The Henley College need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve student retention on AS-level courses, ensure that students have clear expectations about the content of the course and the level of commitment required to succeed. Build on the good, and improving, practice in engaging students in lessons through planned stimulating activities, and in developing students' learning through assessment and questioning.
- Improve the planning of lessons to take account more consistently of individual students' prior knowledge, interests and abilities. Ensure that lessons challenge consistently individual students to work productively and extend their abilities.
- Review the process for target setting for students, so that they have the opportunity to explore their goals and aspirations at the start of the course; develop more meaningful subject and learning targets that are recorded by teachers and students.
- Increase opportunities for students to gain an understanding of discrimination in the workplace and a broader understanding of cultural diversity to prepare them for living and working in diverse communities.
- Strengthen the evaluation of teaching and learning and develop measureable improvement targets for learning and achievement. Monitor improvements systematically through a suite of measures that should include the use of students' performance data. Prioritise the formalised sharing of good practice across subject teams and ensure the consistent planning of staff development to meet improvement priorities.

Visual arts and media

Grade 2

Context

42. The college offers full-time courses at AS- and A-level in art and design, ceramics, film studies, media, and photography; and vocational courses at advanced level in art and design. Of the 370 learners, almost all are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for student are good, but there is a mixed picture of success rates across the range of the provision. Overall, students make only adequate progress compared to their results at GCSE. Success rates for most of the A-level courses are high. However, in A-level media studies, they are below average. The foundation diploma in art and design has consistently achieved very high success rates.
- Students who receive additional learning support succeed well. Attendance and punctuality are good and behaviour is excellent. Progression rates into employment and higher education destinations are high, with many students gaining places on courses at prestigious universities.
- Students' practical work is good. In photography, practical work is of a particularly high quality. Students use lens-based media with confidence; they demonstrate strong compositional understanding and show good technical knowledge. Materials development is strong across all subjects and students possess good technical skills. Much of the practical work across subjects demonstrates highly personal and individual approaches, and a real sense of curiosity in the visual world.
- Students' annotation of their own work is too often descriptive and is not evaluative. However, the development of technical vocabulary and visual language is good; this enables students to express and describe creative practice with confidence.
- Drawing skills are good and students respond positively to specific skills development sessions including life-drawing, printmaking, photography and ceramics. Photography work shows skilful integration of graphic design skills and knowledge. Students use their sketchbooks effectively to record ideas and key technical information.
- Teaching and learning are good, but inspectors found a range of practice. Teachers plan lessons well. Lessons are consistently interactive and contain a variety of activities to keep students interested. In the better lessons, students develop their critical and analytical skills well and make confident contributions to group discussions. In a few lessons students are allowed to pay insufficient attention to their peers and teachers during presentations and discussions.
- Across the range of lessons observed, teachers were inconsistent in their use of questioning to check and extend learning. In the weaker examples, non-directed questioning resulted in students not participating and their

understanding not being checked. Teachers do too little promotion of equality and diversity in lessons.

- Assessment is good. Verbal feedback to students on what they need to do to improve is helpful. Written assessment provides precise subject-based critical feedback, but target-setting too often lacks clear timeframes and deadlines.
- The range of opportunities for educational visits is inconsistent across subjects. Where visits and links with industry are embedded, they are highly effective; in the case of photography, visits often enable students to work with professional practitioners.
- Students are rightly positive about support from tutors and the regular feedback they receive to help them improve. Advice on careers and higher education progression is particularly good and students have clear progression goals and targets. Students have good but infrequent opportunities to express their views at subject level. Staff make insufficient use of these views to inform the improvement of the provision
- Leadership and management are satisfactory and are securing good outcomes for students. Staff make good use of resources. Accommodation is well-maintained and the majority is fit for purpose; however, where it is not, it has a negative impact on aspects of teaching and learning. Staff development is not sufficiently focused on key improvement targets. Opportunities for teachers to share best practice are too infrequent and limited.
- Self-assessment is insufficiently evaluative and does not place enough emphasis on some key performance data. It does not pay adequate attention to teaching and learning, the promotion of equality and diversity, and leadership and management. Quality improvement planning is insufficiently rigorous to ensure sustained improvement. Actions are not specific and timescales and methods for monitoring and review are unclear.

What does The Henley College need to do to improve further?

- Expand the opportunities for teachers to share good practice in teaching and learning in order to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Improve the rigour of the self-assessment process, particularly in relation to the deeper evaluation of teaching and learning, assessment practices, leadership and management, learners' views, and equality and diversity in order to ensure continuous improvement of the provision.
- Ensure that quality improvement plans contain specific actions with milestones and deadlines, enabling clear prioritisation of improvement actions and systematic monitoring of performance.
- Ensure that professional development activity is targeted more closely to specific improvement priorities.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons, through clear identification and planning of appropriate opportunities in the curriculum.
- Ensure that there is a consistent range of employer engagement and educational visit opportunities for learners on all courses.

Information about the inspection

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

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
The Henley 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	16-18 Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	1948	1948	0
Part-time learners	596	73	523
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	3		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
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	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1		
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?	2		
Leadership and management	2	2	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?*	2		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
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?	2		
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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