

MidKent College

General further education college

Inspection dates

13–16 November 2018

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders, managers, governors and staff have developed a highly student-centred ethos. This culture permeates the college.
- Staff are proud to work at MidKent college. They value the passion and determination of the leadership team.
- Leaders, managers and governors have dealt effectively with most of the weaknesses of the previous inspection. As a result, the provision is now good.
- The willingness of staff to engage fully in a strong programme of professional development has led to substantially improved teaching, learning and assessment.
- Students make good progress with their studies. They develop the skills and knowledge they need for their next steps.
- Standards of work for apprentices in the workplace are good.
- Students benefit from a wide range of excellent work placements which are highly relevant to their future career plans. Good employer involvement and engagement further strengthen these arrangements.
- A comprehensive range of support services helps students to maintain healthy minds, bodies and attitudes to learning.
- Achievement of apprentices is too low. Too few apprentices complete their apprenticeships on time.
- Not enough of the large number of students retaking GCSE English and mathematics achieve grades 4 to 9.
- Attendance, although improving, is still too low.

Full report

Information about the provider

- MidKent College is a large general further education college with two sites serving the communities of Kent and Medway. The campus in Gillingham serves the towns in the unitary authority of Medway. The second campus in Maidstone, the county town of Kent, serves nearby towns. Both regions include diverse areas of deprivation and prosperity. The number of pupils at both Medway and Kent schools that achieve all components of the English Baccalaureate is above the national rate. The number of unemployed people in Medway is slightly above the average for the South East. The number of people in employment in Maidstone is higher than the national average.
- The college provides a range of post-16 education and training, including 16 to 19 study programmes in a variety of vocational subjects, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, approximately 5,600 students were enrolled at the college.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should improve the quality of apprenticeship courses by:
 - improving the testing of learning so that staff check in more detail how well apprentices develop their knowledge
 - increasing the level of challenge for those apprentices who miss deadlines or do not attend their off-the-job training
 - improving target-setting so that staff set challenging targets which focus on developing apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours
 - improving the level of apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills by ensuring that they all practise and develop these skills in both the classroom and the workplace.
- Improve further teaching, learning and assessment in GCSE English and mathematics classes so that a higher proportion gain grades 4 to 9, ensuring that students complete work that challenges them and helps them improve their skills.
- Ensure that attendance continues to improve in all areas of the curriculum, and particularly for students studying English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently restructured leadership team have realistic but high ambitions for students and apprentices. They plan well to achieve their aims. Staff appreciate the positive change in culture since the previous inspection. They value the unremitting concentration on improving students' and apprentices' welfare and success. Staff feel valued as workers at the college and take pride in their work. They cite the improved communication and effective inter-departmental working as important contributors to the success of the college.
- Leaders and managers have dealt effectively with most of the recommendations for improvement at the previous inspection. They have improved achievement rates. An extensive and carefully planned programme of professional development and training has helped teachers develop their skills quickly. Most teachers now use information about students' starting points effectively to plan challenging lessons. Students make fast progress and develop their skills well.
- Staff work hard to provide a warm and welcoming environment for students and apprentices. Unaccompanied refugees, who have recently started at college, gain the skills they need for work and to integrate into the community. These students learn to appreciate British culture. They help other students understand about helping others.
- Leaders and managers plan the curriculum appropriately to meet local and regional needs. They work closely and effectively with local enterprise partnerships, borough and county councils and employers to inform the courses they offer. Students benefit from frequent visits from employers which help them understand about the world of work. Employers work closely with staff to help them choose suitable units to study and to inform curriculum choices. For example, the newly introduced digital gaming course meets a local skills shortage of specialist staff.
- Managers and staff work well with employers to increase the number of apprenticeships in line with regional, national and local priorities. Staff match courses well to the needs of employers and local industry.
- Leaders have invested in new staff and more training for teachers to improve the quality of English and mathematics. Attendance at English and mathematics classes has improved, although it is not yet good. More students now achieve their functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. However, not enough students achieve grades 4 to 9 in GCSE English and mathematics qualifications.
- Managers work well with teaching staff to help them develop new skills. For example, teachers on the new multi-skills building trades course learn new plastering techniques to help them better support their students. Advanced practitioners support teachers admirably and help them develop their classroom skills. Teachers have become more reflective about their work. They have a desire to improve their practice continually.
- Leaders and managers make sure that students develop a strong understanding of British values such as democracy and tolerance. This prepares them well for life after college. Students show high levels of respect for staff and each other.
- Managers work effectively with subcontractors. They communicate well with staff in

subcontracted provision. A dedicated curriculum partnership manager makes sure that subcontractors maintain good quality. Most students in subcontracted provision make good progress and pass their qualifications.

- Leaders and managers manage poor performance by staff members effectively. They support them with well-considered action plans. Individually planned staff development helps them improve quickly. Those that do not improve leave the college. The quality of teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection.
- Leaders, managers and governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They know the subjects that need further improvement. Recently introduced additional quality assurance processes have strengthened the accountability of staff and improved the information that managers have about students' progress. Students and apprentices identified as at risk of not completing their courses receive quick help to enable them to achieve.
- Although staff assess the strengths and weaknesses of their departments well, planning for improvement is not as effective. Quality improvement plans are overly descriptive. Targets and reviews do not consider the impact of actions on students and apprentices well enough. As a result, it is difficult for leaders and managers to gauge the progress that they make improving quality throughout the year.
- Leaders have been slow to improve the quality of apprenticeships. They appointed a new apprenticeship leadership team in 2017, along with substantial numbers of new staff. Although achievement rates for apprentices declined further in 2017/18, the actions that the new leadership team have taken are starting to have a positive impact on the quality of this provision.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have high aspirations for the college. They use a diverse range of expertise and skills combined with a detailed knowledge of the local community to hold senior leaders to account. They challenge leaders effectively to make improvements.
- Governors involve themselves fully in the life of the college and visit frequently. By taking part in activities such as assessment validations, student meetings and observations of teaching they improve their knowledge of the quality of the student experience. They know the college well. Detailed reports that senior leaders share with them help them to identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the college.
- Senior leaders and governors work together effectively to make sure that the college is financially sustainable. They plan well to improve college facilities and resources. They invest in leading-edge technology to improve students' job prospects and tackle local skills shortages.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Students and apprentices feel safe and are safe. They know what steps to take if they want to report concerns. They understand how to stay safe when online and how to keep themselves safe when using social media. Teaching and pastoral staff place a high

emphasis on students' safety.

- Safeguarding officers track safeguarding concerns thoroughly. They keep detailed records of actions they take. They use their close links with external agencies effectively when necessary. Safeguarding managers and leaders work well with staff from the local police force. This helps them understand about current threats and concerns. Those interviewing new staff understand and carry out safer recruitment practices.
- Staff and governors complete comprehensive safeguarding training. They update their knowledge frequently. They understand how to protect students and apprentices from dangers including sexting, cyber bullying and child sexual exploitation.
- Students understand well how to protect themselves from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They improve their knowledge about these subjects during their tutorial lessons. However, apprentices do not discuss these topics with their assessors frequently or in depth. Consequently, they only have a superficial understanding of the dangers of extremist behaviour.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good. Teachers and assessors accurately assess the starting points of students and apprentices. They take note of the qualifications, skills and knowledge that students and apprentices have at the start of their course and plan lessons using this information. As a result, the work that most students and apprentices complete challenges them to make fast progress. They extend their knowledge and understanding and develop their skills.
- Most staff know their students well. Staff know the barriers to learning that students may have. They put in place effective support which helps most students to make good progress. Teachers of apprentices make helpful links between the apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. Employers use this information well to provide further coaching in the workplace. Learning support assistants support students and apprentices effectively in the classroom.
- Teachers use a variety of methods to check that students have understood what they are learning. They make sure that students are confident about applying new knowledge and skills. Teachers make good use of revision activities to remind students of the skills they have developed previously. They help them to apply these in different contexts. However, not enough assessors check apprentices' learning carefully enough to be sure about the new skills they are developing.
- Students and apprentices understand the progress they are making. Teachers assess students' work frequently and provide helpful and informative feedback. This highlights what students have done well and how they can improve. However, not enough apprentices receive feedback that shows them how to develop their skills and their work.
- Teachers set most students effective targets. These challenge them to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding. They help them make steady progress towards achieving their goals. However, too few apprentices and students with high needs benefit from effective or useful targets. For students with high needs, targets are insufficiently precise. Too many of these students are unaware of them or unable to recall them.

Assessors do not set targets for apprentices which support them to improve their study skills or motivate enough of them to achieve their full potential.

- Teachers and assessors are well qualified and have good industry experience. They are experts in the subjects that they teach. They have high expectations of students and apprentices to meet the standards required in industry. Students with high needs benefit from a range of well-qualified specialist teachers.
- Almost all teachers use a range of teaching and learning strategies that interest and enthuse their students. They help them to make good progress against their learning objectives. Most students and apprentices develop a range of academic and vocational skills that prepares them well for their next steps.
- Staff support students with complex and challenging difficulties successfully. They make changes to the pace of learning and to the learning environment to make sure that all can learn at a fast pace. Consequently, those who would otherwise have been unsuccessful in formal education succeed.
- Most students develop good English skills in their vocational lessons. Students with high needs create glossaries of important vocational words to improve their knowledge of technical terms. Students develop their technical language well. However, not all teachers correct errors in written work that students submit or share strategies with students that would help them correct their own spelling errors. Although apprentices may have achieved the minimum standard in English required for their framework, they do not receive support to develop their skills further.
- Although teachers establish students' starting points in mathematics, they do not use the information they have to plan learning that improves the mathematical skills of individual students. Too many students spend time on topics that they are confident about. They do not practise frequently enough areas that need further development. Apprentices who have already achieved their mathematics qualifications do not have the opportunity to improve their skills in this important area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students enjoy college life. They speak positively about their experiences and are proud of what they achieve. They behave well in and out of lessons. Staff set high standards and expectations which almost all students meet.
- Leaders and managers make sure that students and apprentices learn in detail about British values. Students and staff demonstrate these well throughout the college. They listen attentively to each other in lessons and value the opinions of others. Students come to class ready to learn. When required, they present themselves professionally in departmental uniform. They work effectively with their peers and staff. They treat each other and staff with respect.
- Students and apprentices receive detailed information about the courses they wish to study before they join the college. They gain from effective and wide-ranging advice and guidance as well as a comprehensive programme of talks and 'taster' sessions. These inform them about course requirements and their next steps well.
- An effective and impartial programme of careers advice and guidance helps students plan in detail for their next steps. Study programme students receive comprehensive support

from a careers leader as well as a team of well qualified and experienced careers advisers. Additionally, students with high needs have access to an external specialist adviser. Adult students access the services of a National Careers Service advisor who supports them well with their career choices. Staff use student alumni very effectively to inform and enthuse students and apprentices about job opportunities and higher education.

- Students undertake a wide range of work-related activities which often involve them working with external businesses and agencies. These prepare them successfully for employment. Students develop their entrepreneurial skills through their involvement in 'Dragons' Den' events. Events with employers help them understand how to be an effective employee. Students take part in 'Worldskills' competitions and apprentices take part in national competitions to help them develop the skills that they need for employment.
- Managers have developed a well-planned and thorough programme of mock interviews which prepares study programme students for employment. Students develop the skills they need to apply for a job and prepare for an interview. They learn about presenting themselves in a professional manner. They receive valuable feedback from a range of employers and external professionals and gain links with employers for their next steps. Adult students develop these skills well within their courses. Apprentices present themselves well at work, dress smartly and work hard. Employers value them as employees.
- Leaders and managers recognise that attendance, although improving, is still too low. They have put in place effective actions that are having a positive impact on attendance in most subjects. In finance, hospitality, public services, sport and travel and tourism students attend well. In English, foundation education, mathematics and for apprentices, attendance remains too low.
- Apprentices and students on study programmes take a range of extra qualifications to improve their job prospects. For example, level 2 engineering and vehicle apprentices complete useful fork-lift truck training in their first year. This broadens their skills and makes them more employable. In engineering, apprentices learn valuable close-quarter firefighting skills. Study programme students on cabin crew courses take additional qualifications in swimming to broaden their skills. Students in construction and engineering take the professional risk assessment qualifications they need for their next steps in the industry.
- A programme of enterprise activities and community projects involves students in team work challenges and fundraising projects. These ventures help students to understand and appreciate the needs of others in the community. For example, students run charity events to develop awareness of breast cancer and young people with autistic spectrum disorder. Public services and sports students work in the youth police advisory group. This helps to improve police engagement and makes a positive difference to their communities.
- Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities throughout the year that develop and extend their personal and social skills. Many of these activities support students to explore their own identity and consider their future options and choices. Apprentices can take part in these activities but do not readily access them. As a result, they are not as well informed or involved as their full-time peers.

- Managers have designed an effective induction and a comprehensive pastoral programme which helps study programme students understand how to keep themselves safe. Almost all students know how to protect themselves from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, apprentices lack the confidence to discuss safeguarding as knowledgeably.
- A comprehensive range of support services helps students to maintain a healthy mind and body. Students have good access to support from counsellors and student welfare officers. These staff assess students' needs effectively and refer them quickly for suitable support or guidance. Apprentices are not always aware of the help that they can receive from college staff and consequently do not take advantage of these services.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The number of study programme and adult students who successfully achieved their qualifications improved in 2017/18 and is now high. More students pass their examinations now than at the time of the previous inspection.
- For the large numbers of study programme students studying at levels 1 and 2, achievement improved substantially in 2017/18 and is high. Students achieve particularly well in care, health, languages, literature and culture and public services. Students with high needs on vocational programmes achieve well.
- For adult students, most of whom study at level 2, achievement also rose substantially in 2017/18, and is high. However, for the small numbers of adults studying at level 1, achievement is low. Adult students studying at the college's two largest subcontractors achieve very well.
- Apprentices' achievement rates declined in 2017/18 and are low. Leaders and managers have taken decisive steps to enable more apprentices to achieve in 2018/19, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions. Apprentices working in accounting, engineering manufacture, plumbing and surveying achieve well.
- Leaders and managers recognise that too many apprentices make slow progress with their courses. They have taken sensible actions to improve timely completion by apprentices, which are starting to have a positive impact.
- Study programme students, adult students and students with high needs make good progress with developing their skills and knowledge. They enjoy their learning. Around half of those taking vocational subjects at level 3 in 2017/18 made better than expected progress.
- Adult students and those on study programmes produce work of a high standard and are proud of their work. They gain the skills and knowledge that they need to achieve their qualifications. Students with high needs develop their confidence and communication skills well. They learn the social skills that they will need to be more independent. Most work that apprentices complete in the workplace is of a professional standard.
- Students who take functional skills English and mathematics qualifications achieve well, although students with high needs do not achieve as well as they should at levels 1 and 2. The proportion of students achieving grades 4 to 9 in GCSE English increased substantially in 2017/18. However not enough students studying GCSE English or

mathematics gain good passes and higher grades in these important subjects.

- As a result of their effective data analysis and action planning, leaders and managers improved achievement by White British students and male students in 2017/18, who previously underperformed. However, they have not been successful in improving the poor achievement of the small number of female apprentices, who achieve substantially worse than male apprentices.
- Almost all study programme students progress to apprenticeships, employment, further education or higher education. Most apprentices continue in employment. Almost all high needs students progress to further education or employment. Although managers track student destinations in detail, leaders do not analyse student destination information in enough detail to celebrate strengths or identify weaknesses.
- Very high numbers of students completing level 3 two-year courses progressed from year one to year two in 2018. However, the proportion of students who progress from level 1 to level 2 courses at the college is low.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Nearly 3,500 students follow study programmes, with almost all studying vocational courses. Most students study at level 1 or 2, with around a fifth studying at level 3. Large numbers of students take GCSE and functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. The largest curriculum areas are arts, construction, health, social and child care and media studies.
- Leaders and managers plan and manage study programmes effectively. They place high levels of importance on English, mathematics and work experience. They have successfully improved teaching, learning and assessment for study programme students. More students achieve their level 1 and 2 qualifications than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Teachers use information about students' starting points and their potential barriers to learning effectively to plan their lessons. They use a wide variety of teaching and learning activities which keep students interested. Most students make rapid progress towards achieving their academic targets.
- In most lessons teachers question students skilfully to extend their learning. They check students' knowledge and understanding well. Teachers make very effective use of information learning technology to extend students' learning. Their teaching enthuses students and motivates them to succeed.
- Students take pride in the work that they complete. They are keen to show what they have achieved. Those on vocational study programmes gain good practical skills. For example, students studying sport learn about how blood flow into the heart works and how sport increases levels of fitness. Those studying travel and tourism learn about the skills they need to be a travel representative abroad. Students behave professionally and learn in realistic working environments. They develop the technical language they will encounter in their future careers successfully.
- Students behave admirably in class and around both campuses. They are courteous and

respectful. Attendance, although improved, is lower than the college target in a few vocational lessons. In a small minority of lessons poor punctuality disrupts the start of lessons.

- Leaders and managers make sure that students benefit from an outstanding work experience programme. Almost all study programme students, including those with high needs, take part in ambitious, relevant and challenging external placements. Managers make sure that these placements align with students' vocational studies. For example, animal care students work in pet shops and business students work in a range of businesses. Construction multi-trades students learn about work through placements with tools suppliers. Vehicle maintenance students improve their practical skills during placements with vehicle body repair centres and garages.
- Students receive good impartial careers advice. Most have a clear idea of what their next steps will be and know how to achieve their goals. Staff help them to explore their options for progression well. Almost all students progress into further or higher education, employment or apprenticeships.
- In almost all technical subjects, teachers include mathematics effectively within their teaching. Students recognise how mathematics applies to their future careers. For example, in carpentry lessons teachers frequently discuss calculations including measurement, area and units. In electrical installation lessons, teachers highlight complex mathematical equations as commonplace in the work students will go on to do.
- Students who have already achieved their GCSE English and mathematics qualifications attend extended English and mathematics lessons to develop their skills. These lessons challenge them to apply these skills in more complex and sophisticated ways.
- Too few students studying GCSE English and mathematics achieve good passes and high grades. In most mathematics lessons all students complete the same work. They have too few opportunities to practise the topics they need to work on. Teachers do not give students enough feedback about how to recognise and improve errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. As a result, students repeat the same mistakes over time.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They improve their knowledge of topics such as staying safe online, diversity and protecting themselves from radicalisation and extremism during effective tutorial lessons. They can explain how this learning relates to their adult lives and future careers.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The college offers a range of adult learning programmes providing progression routes to employment and further study. At the time of inspection there were just under 1,400 adult students attending courses across both college sites. Just over three quarters of adults study at level 2, taking courses including care, preparation for employment and retail. Of those who study at level 3, the majority take access to higher education courses.
- Leaders and managers are highly ambitious for the success of adult students. They have developed close and effective partnerships with a range of adult providers, local employers and organisations. Active participation in local community forums and with the local enterprise partnership helps managers to make sure that they plan to meet fully

employer and community needs and priorities. A wide range of courses for adult students, including programmes supporting and promoting transition to college, help those returning to education with their next steps.

- Successful subcontracting arrangements help leaders to improve the range of courses that they can offer adult students. They work closely with JobCentre Plus staff to identify those who benefit from specialist courses designed to move them into employment. Leaders and managers work strategically with subcontractors to make sure that courses are financially sustainable and taught in the best locations for their students. Almost all adults who study in subcontracted provision achieve their qualifications.
- Staff work closely with local universities to make sure that students studying on access to higher education programmes are prepared well for higher-level study. Staff use student ambassador initiatives successfully to increase the numbers of students accepted onto university places. The number of students taking access courses who gain places at higher education is high, and above national rates. Around a quarter of students following these programmes gain very high grades.
- Students benefit from well-designed 'entry to access' programmes which equip them well for the rigour of level 3 courses. Effective teaching helps students on these courses develop their English, mathematics and study skills well. These courses prepare students returning to study for progression to higher-level courses.
- Managers and staff use rigorous advice and guidance interviews to identify students' starting points effectively. They use this information successfully to plan lessons that suit the needs of students. As a result, students are interested in learning and enjoy lessons. They develop the skills they need for their next steps.
- In most lessons teachers plan well-designed learning activities that interest students. Teachers give students frequent and detailed feedback which identifies how they can improve their work. Students are clear about the progress they make and know how to improve. In a small number of lessons poor planning, weak questioning and a lack of challenge for the most able students result in a slower pace of learning.
- Teachers track students' progress effectively. Students and staff work together to set challenging yet achievable targets to achieve. Students take pride in their work and produce practical and written work of good quality. They develop their technical language well and learn to apply theoretical concepts to practical work. For example, in an electrical engineering lesson, students applied the theory they had learned to successfully compare and test diodes.
- Attendance for adult students remains too low, particularly at GCSE English and mathematics lessons.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Just over 900 students follow an apprenticeship programme, with almost all studying on frameworks. Just over half of these study at level 2, with just under half at level 3 and a small number taking higher apprenticeships. The apprenticeship offer covers a wide range of sector areas, principally in business, construction, engineering and retail. Smaller numbers are on accounting, catering, customer service, health and social care, information technology and pharmacy.

- Achievement rates for apprentices are low and vary too much across subjects. While the numbers completing their apprenticeship in intermediate-level accounting, business administration, engineering, plumbing and surveying have improved, in advanced-level electro-technical, health and social care and plumbing and heating they remain too low.
- Since the previous inspection leaders and managers have invested in electronic portfolio and tracking software to improve how well they check apprentices' progress. While still at an early stage, managers now have a much clearer picture of those apprentices whose progress is too slow. Staff have devised effective support plans for those who are at risk of exceeding their planned end date. Currently, around two thirds of current apprentices are making expected progress. Managers are working closely with employers to make sure that apprentices who have passed their end date are finishing their final assessments as quickly as possible.
- Over the past year leaders and managers have increased the numbers of well-qualified specialist assessors and teachers. Most apprentices now receive training which helps them to develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours to high standards. However, a minority of teachers do not plan college lessons effectively to cater for a wide enough range of skills and ability levels. As a result, more-able apprentices find the pace of learning too slow and activities repetitive or mundane.
- Not enough staff check how well apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Assessors do not set targets that encourage and motivate apprentices to achieve their full potential. They concentrate too much on unit completion rather than setting challenging targets that develop apprentices' skills and knowledge. When apprentices miss deadlines or do not attend their off-the-job training, staff do not challenge them sufficiently to make sure that they improve their attendance and catch up.
- Too few apprentices develop sufficiently good skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT). Since the previous inspection leaders and managers have provided more classes and learning materials for apprentices. However, because apprentices do not routinely practise these valuable skills in the workplace, apprentices only improve slowly.
- Assessors are keen for apprentices to do well and have high expectations. They move apprentices onto more complex work as soon as they feel able. In larger companies, apprentices move between departments to experience the full range of their employer's business. This helps apprentices with their future career choices. Most know their next steps in work and learning.
- Apprentices take part successfully in regional competitions. They receive masterclasses from previous apprentices and employers to improve their practical skills, such as learning about the latest hair-styling techniques and understanding the different needs of clients in a business environment. Staff give useful extra training in running a small business for those interested in becoming self-employed.
- The advice and guidance that apprentices receive at the start of their apprenticeship have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Staff assess applicants' suitability for their choice of apprenticeship well. The small numbers of apprentices on newly offered standards apprenticeships understand how staff set their target grades of pass, merit and distinction. They know the principles of the end-point assessment. The numbers of apprentices who leave early have reduced and are now very low.

- Apprentices are smart, well presented and work hard. They settle quickly into busy workplaces and are proud of the work they achieve. They know how to stay safe in hazardous situations. Employers appreciate the contributions apprentices make to their businesses. Almost all apprentices achieve progress to permanent employment and higher-level qualifications. An increasing proportion gain promotion and increased responsibility on completion.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college currently has 145 students receiving high-needs funding from two local authorities. They take courses ranging from entry to level 3. Just over half of students with high needs are in specific supported and foundation learning, with others on vocational programmes. Around three quarters of students with high needs attend the Medway site.
- Since the previous inspection managers have greatly improved provision for students with high needs. Newly designed vocational courses for those on supported and foundation learning programmes help students to develop their technical and job-related skills effectively. Leaders and managers use funding successfully to meet students' individual needs and to support them successfully.
- Students take pride in their work. They receive detailed, constructive and prompt feedback from teachers. This helps students to improve their work and make fast progress.
- Students improve their independence and communication skills well. They become more confident at speaking, contributing to discussions and making decisions. The skills that they develop help them when they leave college.
- Students develop their literacy and numeracy skills well. Those on vocational courses receive useful feedback which helps them to improve their spelling and grammar. Students use vocabulary books to record and improve their development of technical language. Staff include mathematical concepts in vocational lessons to help students understand the practical implications of numeracy. For example, students on gardening programmes learn to calculate area and perimeter to help them to establish the size of land.
- Staff use a wide range of employers to provide useful external placements for students to develop their vocational skills effectively. Students benefit from a well-planned and extensive programme of work experience. Managers are keen to improve the number of students who progress into paid work and are introducing a supported internship programme in the new year.
- Students develop the skills they need for future employment. Those in supported and foundation learning improve their understanding of how businesses work. They learn about profit and loss by taking part in enterprise activities including a Halloween cake bake, the Poppy Appeal, Guide Dogs for the Blind and a pop-up kitchen.
- Staff use their specialist expertise to provide highly effective information and guidance to students and their families. Staff support those with a range of concerns and anxieties, including families in crisis, effectively. Those requiring mental health intervention or counselling advice receive prompt and detailed help.

- Students who were once not in education, employment or training or who did not attend secondary school in the past make substantial progress. Staff support them to move into college and attend as full-time students effectively.
- Students feel safe and are safe. They behave well and are keen to succeed. They are respectful towards each other and work conscientiously. They learn how to become more tolerant individuals. Support staff know their students and use their expertise to encourage and develop independence. As a result, students are keen to work on their own. They learn to take ownership for their own behaviour and levels of support are often reduced by mutual agreement.
- Leaders recognise the need to improve students' achievement of English and mathematics qualifications, as these are too low. Staff have put in place new strategies this academic year, which include providing extra support for students, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130726
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	7,359
Principal/CEO	Simon Cook
Telephone number	01634 383000
Website	www.midkent.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	721	345	1,317	431	1,415	386	2	21
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	314	136	238	191	12	60		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	145							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Mainstream Learning Curve Group Medway Youth Trust							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive director for 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. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Andy Fitt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kate Hill	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Herbert	Ofsted Inspector
Nicki Adams	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Kaye	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Bramley	Ofsted Inspector
Terri Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Griffin	Ofsted Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Her Majesty's Inspector

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