

Harlow College

Further education college

Inspection dates

22–25 January 2019

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	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors and leaders have a clear vision and high ambitions for learners and apprentices. As a result, learners and apprentices make good progress and are successful in gaining employment within their chosen careers.
- Managers of curriculum areas adeptly identify the strengths and weaknesses and take swift actions to bring about improvements.
- Employers play an essential part in the design of programmes that learners and apprentices study. As a result, learners and apprentices gain the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by employers.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from highly effective careers advice and guidance and substantial contact with employers. This prepares them well for work.
- Teachers use their up-to-date expertise very well to ensure that learners make strong progress towards their chosen careers.
- Teachers use digital learning extensively to reinforce and extend learning. This enables learners to make more rapid progress and become more independent.
- Learners receive effective support when they have specific barriers to learning. As a result, learners with high needs make good progress towards employment and in developing greater independence.
- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour is excellent. They have highly mature and motivated attitudes towards learning.
- A very high proportion of adult learners achieve their qualifications, and most progress into employment.
- Assessors work very effectively with employers to ensure that apprentices make rapid progress.
- Leaders have been too slow to make improvements in English and mathematics programmes, particularly those leading to functional skills qualifications.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what learners and apprentices can achieve. As a result, the most able learners and apprentices do not make the swift progress of which they are capable.
- There remains too much variation between the achievement of different groups of apprentices.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Harlow College is a medium-sized further education college. The main site is in Harlow. The college has a further site at Stansted, the Stansted Airport College, which opened in September 2018. In addition, there are two adult learning centres, one in Harlow within walking distance of the main site and one in Stansted.
- The college offers 16 to 19 study programmes to 2,585 learners, adult learning programmes for approximately 2,000 learners, 493 apprenticeships and has around 120 learners with high needs. The college offers courses in a variety of subject areas, including engineering, construction, performing arts, media and A levels.
- Harlow is an area with high levels of deprivation and a larger proportion of the population live in social housing than nationally. Learners from this area leave school with a lower GCSE grade profile than the UK average. The college also has a large proportion of children looked after, and/or studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, due to the large number of asylum seekers in the surrounding areas.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more learners make swift progress in improving their skills and achieving their qualifications in English and mathematics, by:
 - focusing managers' and teachers' actions more effectively on improving the support provided for functional skills
 - ensuring that all learners attend their classes in English and mathematics regularly and punctually
 - continuing to make improvements to the teaching, learning and assessment of GCSEs and functional skills.
- Make sure that teachers set, monitor and review precise and ambitious targets for learners and apprentices that enable them to make rapid progress, particularly for the most able.
- Reduce the variability in achievement between different groups of apprentices, by monitoring the performance of these apprentices carefully, identifying reasons for non-achievement and taking prompt action to address these.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors and leaders have a clear vision for the college and high ambitions for learners and apprentices, which are sharply focused on developing the skills, knowledge and behaviours that learners require to succeed. Leaders have a relentless approach in ensuring that learners and apprentices are successful in gaining employment within their chosen careers. All staff throughout the college share the ambitions and values that governors and leaders set.
- Leaders have maintained the strengths from the previous inspection in the careers advice and guidance that learners and apprentices receive. Learners have clear plans for their routes into employment or their next stage of education on completion of their studies.
- Leaders and managers work successfully with an extensive range of organisations and employers to meet local and regional skills priorities. For example, the recently opened campus based at Stansted Airport enables learners to study qualifications that prepare them for a career in the aviation industry. Employers play an important role in shaping the design of the curriculum. This ensures that learners and apprentices secure the skills required by employers.
- Managers responsible for bringing about improvements in their curriculum areas know their provision well. They accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses and take swift action to bring about improvements. For example, managers' actions have resulted in apprentices making good progress in completing their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers are relentless in improving the quality of provision. They focus closely on developing teachers' skills and ensure that existing good practice is shared and celebrated. Managers' appraisal of staff performance is accurate and insightful.
- Managers ensure that learners and apprentices make good progress. Staff check learners' and apprentices' progress frequently and take rapid action should learners and apprentices fall behind in their studies. Leaders have ensured that learners on study programmes have high achievement; few gaps exist between different groups of learners.
- Leaders and staff have created an open culture at the college. Staff and learners work together well and respect each other's views. Through well-planned tutorials and special events, staff promote learners' wider understanding of British values such as tolerance. For example, learners learn about the Holocaust and its causes, and the dangers posed by extremism.
- Leaders have been too slow to ensure improvements in programmes leading to qualifications in English and mathematics, particularly in functional skills. Leaders have placed a high strategic priority on improving provision in English and mathematics. As a result, some signs of improvement are evident, particularly for learners re-taking their GCSEs. However, actions have not yet been fully effective.
- Leaders have been effective in closing the gaps in achievement that existed previously between groups of learners on study programmes. Managers' swift actions have already had a demonstrable impact on improving the proportion of younger apprentices who achieve their qualifications in a timely manner. However, the gaps in the achievement of

other groups of apprentices have widened slightly since the previous inspection.

- Leaders and managers accurately self-assess the quality of provision. However, quality improvement planning lacks the precision, focus and oversight needed to drive rapid improvement.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are keenly involved in setting the strategic direction of the college and use their wide range of skills to provide suitable support and challenge to leaders.
- Governors have ensured that good financial management, including good financial risk management, has enabled the college to grow in priority areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and aviation, and that learners have access to good-quality resources.
- Despite the lack of clear targets at a strategic level, the governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well and ask searching questions of leaders to hold them to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders effectively ensure the safety of learners and apprentices at the college and in the workplace. Leaders ensure that learners on study programmes are safe in work placements.
- The college's designated safeguarding lead and deputies are appropriately trained to advise and support staff when referrals are made. They follow up any referrals to completion with detailed records of their monitoring and intervention actions.
- All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders regularly liaise with a wide range of external agencies to keep them informed of the risks that learners may face, and use these partnerships effectively to keep learners safe. Learners and apprentices have an adequate awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and the threats prevalent in the area in which they live and study. Learners know how to keep themselves safe online.
- The governor with responsibility for safeguarding is trained for this part of her role. She is involved in the college's safeguarding group and is well informed about all safeguarding issues. All governors have received safeguarding training at the appropriate level, and regular, detailed reports are provided to governors by college leaders.
- The recording of staff actions and risk assessment is not fully developed. This is because the introduction of new safeguarding software to record safeguarding incidents is not yet integrated with existing, established systems. As a result, senior leaders do not have complete oversight of how well safeguarding matters have been resolved.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their extensive and up-to-date subject knowledge and professional experience highly effectively to enthuse and guide learners in their vocational areas. For example, teachers use their knowledge of the latest technical developments in engine management very skilfully to prepare learners to meet changing customer needs.
- Support for learners and apprentices is good. For example, where learners join full-time programmes late or risk falling behind in their programmes, teachers intervene promptly to help them catch up. Learners who are identified with specific learning needs are given timely and skilful support through the college's extensive support team. As a result, these learners make good progress and succeed as well as other learners.
- Teachers make highly effective use of digital resources, such as tablets and mobile phone applications, to reinforce and extend learning, both inside and outside the classroom. For example, learners use the tablets they are given when they join the college in carefully structured ways to explore topics more independently or to show their understanding of key learning points. As a result, learners take greater responsibility for their learning, and gain good research skills, such as analysis and evaluation.
- Most learners make good progress in developing their skills in English and mathematics in vocational contexts. For example, teachers ensure that learners can understand and confidently use the correct specialist and technical terminology of their subject area in spoken and written communications. In vocational areas, teachers routinely promote the mathematical skills required for their areas. As a result, learners accurately apply these skills to their vocational studies. For example, they calculate quantities of materials in construction, compression ratios in motor vehicle studies, and average retail and service client spend in hairdressing salons.
- Teachers monitor and assess learners' progress frequently and provide them with detailed feedback so that learners are clear about what they need to do to improve. However, teachers do not provide sufficiently clear individual targets for learning in lessons, or respond effectively to adapt learning during lessons. As a result, the most able learners do not achieve as well as they should.
- Learners studying GCSE English and mathematics make good progress in improving their skills in these subjects. Learners now receive regular 'health checks' of their skills and carefully focused one-to-one support. Teachers in GCSE English and mathematics agree specific targets with these learners to help them improve. They also provide learners with good revision resources in the areas identified for improvement. However, too many learners in functional skills classes do not see the relevance of these subjects to their chosen vocational subjects, and many regard these subjects as too difficult. Consequently, learners' attendance at lessons in functional skills is poor, and too few learners achieve their qualifications.
- Too often, teachers do not give learners enough time to absorb new learning. They do not check or consolidate learners' understanding adequately before moving on to new topics. For example, where learners make useful contributions to the discussion, teachers do not build on these effectively to prompt further discussion or expand the learning of other learners.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners and apprentices are proud of the work they do and what they achieve while at college or at work. They are confident in their skills and work well with their peers. For example, at Stansted Airport College, learners on pre-apprenticeship programmes display extremely high standards of professional behaviour and personal presentation; they are able to accurately describe their work and progress in detail.
- Learners undertake a broad range of work-related activities that prepare them well for the workplace. These include numerous contacts with employers and visits to real work environments. The proportion of learners on study programmes who engage in meaningful work experience placements has increased significantly this year, including for learners with high needs. There are clear arrangements in place for the vast majority of learners to complete placements. The expanded team of work placement officers effectively aids learners in securing useful work placements.
- Learners and apprentices complete additional qualifications to enhance their future employability. Teachers use carefully selected projects and 'live' briefs to reinforce the links with employment and make learning relevant to learners on study programmes. Learners with high needs gain skills that prepare them well for work, and many are involved in projects that enable them to integrate well within their communities. For example, learners on the college's supported studies provision run a shop in the town centre. They were involved in setting up the premises prior to its opening. They engage with the public and work well together as a team.
- Apprentices further their skills in English and mathematics well through their studies and workplaces. Learners with high needs rapidly improve their skills through the projects they complete. Learners on study programmes acquire skills in English and mathematics that are appropriate to their vocational areas. In addition, learners from across all curriculum areas enhance their communication skills and confidence, including by being 'ambassadors' to welcome visitors to the college. They attend meetings about digital skills and take part in award ceremonies and promotional videos for the college.
- The large proportion of children looked after, who are unaccompanied asylum seekers on ESOL study programmes, engage well with the National Citizen Service programme. Through this programme, they further integrate into the local community, link to local, regional and national charities, and improve their wider social skills. In addition, staff ensure that the diversity these learners bring into the college is celebrated. As a result, learners are highly respectful of each other and their differences.
- Learners and apprentices receive highly effective careers advice and guidance. Learners regularly access this service at the college. They make good use of the effective resources within the college's careers area, which help them in finding employment and gaining advice about progression to higher education or further learning. These include free digital resources that they can access remotely. Adult learners acquire good entrepreneurial skills that enable them to identify opportunities to establish their own new businesses.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from a broad range of enrichment activities and tutorials. Learners engage with projects to explore aspects of diversity. For example, as part of tutorial activities, learners created a range of promotional materials and videos to make their peers aware of a range of social issues. This culminated in the 'no love for hate' campaign, which is visible across the college. Learners who engaged with this project have a well-developed awareness of extremist views, such as far-right viewpoints,

and the negative impact these have on wider society. However, most learners and apprentices only have a basic understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

- Staff embed enrichment activities well in most curriculum areas to enhance learning programmes. Learners and apprentices take part in residential visits, skills shows, careers fairs, university visits and visits to employers. Learners frequently raise money for charities through fund-raising events. Learners also engage in a range of sports and social activities that are offered across the week.
- Leaders and staff have ensured that there are effective support systems in place for the increasing number of learners and apprentices with mental health concerns. This includes support from specific staff on site to provide counselling sessions and helpful links to NHS mental health services.
- Attendance to lessons is good and has improved from last year. However, attendance to English and mathematics classes remains too low. Learners are punctual to classes and they behave well in lessons. Teachers manage behaviour effectively.
- Learners feel safe, know how to keep themselves safe and whom to report concerns to. They have a good understanding of online safety through the college's digital focus.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- A very high proportion of learners and apprentices progress to positive destinations at the end of their programmes. For those progressing to employment, most remain within the same vocational area. A large proportion progress to the next stage of education, including higher education from academic programmes at level 3. Most apprentices are successful in gaining promotion at work and increased salaries after completing their apprenticeship.
- The majority of learners and apprentices make good or better progress in developing and extending their skills and knowledge. Learners on the college's supported studies programmes make particularly good progress in developing skills in independence towards employment. However, too many of the most able learners and apprentices on vocational programmes do not reach their potential.
- The standards of learners' work are high and at least meet those expected for their level on most courses. More learners on study programmes are achieving higher grades than in previous cohorts. Apprentices' work often exceeds the requirements of their programmes, and apprentices are now making more rapid progress than they did last year.
- The proportion of learners on study programmes who achieve their qualifications improved significantly in 2017/18 from the previous year, but remained low overall. The proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications has remained high. Learners studying A levels continue to make swift progress and significantly more learners achieved their substantial qualifications at level 3 than had done previously. The proportion of learners and apprentices who remain on their programmes is now high.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications remained in line with the low national rate in 2017/18. However, there was a significant decline to a low rate in the proportion of 16- to 18-year-old apprentices on advanced apprenticeship programmes who achieved within their planned timescales. Apprentices aged over 19 had a significant

improvement in achievement. Leaders' current data indicates that they are successfully narrowing the gaps in achievement between different age groups and levels.

- Too few learners who re-sat their English and/or mathematics GCSE examinations in 2018 achieved grade 4 or above. Learners studying towards these qualifications are now making more rapid progress in improving their skills in these subjects. A high proportion of adult learners now achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. However, too few learners and apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications, particularly those aged 16 to 18.
- There were no significant gaps in achievement between groups of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes or for adult learners. Leaders successfully narrowed any gaps that did exist previously. However, too many gaps remain in achievement between different groups of apprentices, including for those with and without a learning difficulty and/or disability and between different ethnic groups.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- There are 2,585 learners on study programmes at the college. Around two thirds of these are on level 3 vocational programmes, with a smaller cohort studying A levels. Approximately 700 learners are on level 2 study programmes and a further 500 are at level 1. The largest curriculum areas are engineering and aviation studies, construction, sport and media. Leaders ensure that the principles of the study programme are met in full.
- Most learners develop a good level of knowledge, skills and behaviour, which prepares them to work effectively in their chosen vocational areas or careers. Teachers use their up-to-date knowledge, industry expertise and links well to ensure that activities motivate and enthuse learners. As a result, learners acquire good practical skills and deepen their understanding of theoretical concepts. For example, learners on level 3 engineering programmes use their knowledge and understanding of the use of process capability tolerances in quality control and apply this tool in more complex vocational contexts.
- Learners gain industry-standard knowledge and skills and produce excellent practical work through the use of live employer briefs and projects. Employers are involved in their learning programmes and set high expectations for learners. For example, a large national publisher visited learners on a level 3 media course to set a brief to create audio books based on a live project within its company. Learners were able to master the standards required by the industry through their contact with this employer.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of work-related activity and work experience opportunities that enrich their learning and bring them into direct contact with employers and real work situations. Learners secure an in-depth knowledge and experience of work, and learners are strongly motivated by these opportunities.
- Teachers closely monitor learners' progress and provide feedback effectively in a variety of formats, including through the extensive use of technology. As a result, most learners are keenly aware of what they need to do to achieve well and most improve their work accordingly. However, too many teachers do not challenge the most able learners to make the progress of which they are capable. When work is not sufficiently challenging,

learners are not stretched and do not make rapid progress.

- Learners improve their knowledge, understanding and ability to use the technical language related to their subject area. Teachers display key words prominently in the classroom, make use of 'working walls', and use glossaries to further learners' abilities to use technical language accurately. Teachers routinely challenge errors in written English, including inaccurate spelling. As a result, learners improve their written and spoken English skills.
- Teachers enable learners to acquire relevant mathematical skills within their vocational lessons. For example, learners on the level 2 beauty therapy course confidently and accurately costed a range of nail treatments, including product, labour and fixed costs. Learners on a level 3 mechanical engineering course applied mathematical skills effectively to the production of process tolerance bell charts.
- Teachers of GCSE English and mathematics set effective targets with learners that take account of their individual abilities in these subjects. As a result, this is helping to accelerate their progress. However, most learners on functional skills English and mathematics qualifications make poor progress. Teachers do not take account of individual learners' starting points, and learners' attendance and punctuality to these lessons are poor.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- There are around 2,000 adult learners at the college. Most adults are on employability programmes, 180 are on adult learning programmes (including access to higher education courses and professional programmes), and 260 are on English and mathematics functional skills courses.
- Managers plan highly individualised programmes for adult learners through good-quality partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and numerous employers. Teachers effectively establish the skills adults have at the start of their programmes and their aspirations. Consequently, adults are placed on appropriate programmes that meet their development needs and support them to be successful in work. Adult learners gain excellent skills that prepare them for employment well through bespoke courses and additional qualifications that are clearly linked to the industries in which they are planning to work.
- The majority of adult learners make good progress in developing their skills in English and mathematics. Teachers effectively promote these skills in their vocational lessons. Adults on English and mathematics programmes achieve functional skills qualifications at increasing levels and make rapid progress in improving their skills and knowledge in these subjects.
- Teachers of adult learners use a wide variety of techniques to foster interest, consolidate learning and deepen understanding. As a result, most adults produce good-quality work and make swift progress. For example, in advanced accounting lessons, teachers provide detailed booklets, electronic tablets and online resources for learners to use between lessons. These complement and extend the learning in the classroom.
- The majority of adults are clear about their plans for their chosen destinations. They understand how their qualifications will help them in the future and have good access to independent careers guidance. For example, learners on functional skills English courses

understand how the course will help them progress to advanced careers such as in nursing, including onto the access to nursing course at the college.

- Unemployed adults are supported effectively into work. Managers fund additional certificates, and provide licences in preparation for work, and transport, to successfully remove barriers to learning. A very large proportion of adult learners progress into work or the next level of study at the end of their courses. Over half of those on employability programmes for unemployed adults gain employment.
- Too many teachers do not sufficiently challenge adults to achieve as well as they could. When activities do not meet the needs of the most able learners, progress is too slow.
- The majority of teachers monitor well the progress that adult learners make across all strands of the provision. However, most short- and long-term targets for those on full-time programmes are not sufficiently detailed. Consequently, adult learners are not clear about how they can make more rapid progress.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college has 493 apprentices in 10 subject areas, predominantly in engineering and manufacturing technologies, and business administration and law. Of these, 155 are intermediate, 310 are advanced and 28 are higher apprentices. There are 249 apprentices aged 16 to 18 and 244 are over 19 years old. Leaders and managers have introduced a range of new standards-based apprenticeships and these meet the principles in full.
- Staff provide good, relevant and role-specific training that meets apprentices' needs, improves their skills and understanding and enables them to make a valuable contribution to their employers' business. Staff ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet employers' expectations. Staff and employers work closely together in planning learning, so that off-the-job training complements and accelerates the pace of apprentices' workplace learning. Assessors effectively link assessments to apprentices' responsibilities at work. Apprentices also undertake additional units. For example, motor vehicle apprentices can complete a level 3 award in automotive refrigerant handling.
- Teachers deliver good off-the-job training and make effective links to the skills required in the workplace. Apprentices are able to link theoretical concepts learned at college well to their job roles. For example, motor vehicle apprentices learned to skilfully extract relevant diagnostic information from a data analyser that they now use in their workplaces. However, in off-the-job training sessions at college, too many teachers do not adequately challenge the most able apprentices to make the swift progress of which they are capable. In too many lessons, work is not matched well enough to what apprentices can already do, and the most able are not stretched.
- Apprentices work in safe environments. They demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety. For example, electrical installations apprentices conduct in-depth safety checks to run a length of cable in a roof rafter. Apprentices in practical working environments understand the care needed when using hand tools and consistently do so in practice.
- Most apprentices are now making good progress. Staff complete detailed risk assessments on each apprentice, and monitor their progress and make regular updates. Staff intervene quickly when an apprentice is at risk of not achieving or not making the

desired progress. As a result, significantly higher proportions of apprentices are now achieving within their planned timescales.

- Staff ensure that apprentices improve their skills in English and mathematics, both through improved delivery of functional skills lessons and in relation to work skills. Apprentices attend numeracy and literacy support sessions, even if they already hold high grades in their GCSEs. Apprentices complete an additional learning support log to record progress in these areas and in wider specific support activities, such as practical sessions and assistance in forming sentence structures.
- Staff provide apprentices with good careers guidance before, during and after their programme. As a result, over half of apprentices progress into promoted positions at the end of their course. For example, an advanced business administration apprentice was signposted to a level 3 events assistant module to secure a recently created full-time role at their company.
- Teachers and assessors provide highly effective and constructive feedback to apprentices. Assessors' feedback in most progress reviews includes guidance to help apprentices further improve their work and how to improve the standard of their written English. Apprentices produce a good standard of work with few spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors. However, teachers and assessors do not set consistently effective targets for apprentices in reviews of progress and following assessment activities. Too many targets set by assessors are focused on the completion of criteria to achieve units and not on the individual development needs of each apprentice.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- There are 128 learners with high needs at the college; 62 learners are on study programmes and 66 are on supported studies provision. There are 78 learners who have education, health and care (EHC) plans and 22 learners are on supported internships.
- Leaders and managers use funding well for learners with high needs. They ensure that learners have very effective individual programmes to meet their specific needs. This includes specialist staff training and the installation of a sensory room, which learners were actively involved in planning, designing and fitting.
- Staff use information and communication technology very effectively to ensure that learners become more independent in their learning. Learners use a wide range of applications to access resources, research information and to produce work of a good standard. Learners use tablets confidently to capture evidence of their progress, such as by creating 'vlogs'. As a result, learners can very confidently and effectively identify the skills they gain over time.
- Leaders and managers have successfully and significantly changed the curriculum offer for the college's supported studies provision. As a result, learners acquire very good skills to prepare them for employment, and build confidence in social situations. Learners work on a range of projects linked to enterprise, and access work experience placements or focused work-related activities in large companies and community organisations. Leaders have recently introduced supported internships to the curriculum, which have resulted in more learners progressing into paid employment.
- Most staff provide learners with highly effective verbal feedback on how to improve

further. They use questioning effectively to prompt and encourage learners to reflect on prior learning and to self-correct. For example, learners in a tutorial produced their own notes on individual tablets with simple grammatical errors. Staff did not correct the errors but asked probing questions linked to earlier learning. Learners independently identified missed capital letters and full stops, and accurately corrected their own work.

- Staff enable learners to further their skills in English and mathematics very well in most lessons. As a result, learners grow in confidence in social and work situations and have a better understanding of numbers in practical contexts. Teachers effectively build learners' vocabulary, and link key words in natural situations to explore language further. Staff now deliver 'problem solving' and 'communication' lessons, which learners enjoy, and in which they are making good progress to develop their skills in English and mathematics.
- Staff work effectively in consultation with the learner, parent or carer, vocational area managers and the special educational needs manager to ensure that learners progress successfully to a programme that best suits their needs and long-term goals. Learners progress to study programmes with effective additional support in place. As a result, learners who have high needs achieve in line with their peers.
- Staff assess most learners' progress effectively through the recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) process. Learners on these programmes make progress against individual targets linked to their long-term aspirations and their EHC plans. Staff skilfully work with learners to break down these goals into short, focused targets that prepare them effectively for their next steps. However, although learners studying towards a qualification have clear targets, the small steps taken to show progress are not recorded as effectively. Too many targets lack specific timelines. As a result, these learners are not always clear about what they have achieved and the progress they have made.
- Leaders and managers work closely with local authorities to provide impartial advice and guidance on learners' next steps, linked to their EHC plan targets. Staff work effectively with other providers to ensure that potential learners whose needs cannot be met at the college are signposted to more appropriate provision. As a result, learners are successfully supported into further education or training, supported internships, employment and into the community.
- Learners access an excellent range of support both in college and through external providers. Staff work with educational psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health teams and other therapists to ensure that learners are supported well. Learners make rapid progress due to the breadth of excellent specialist support they receive, for example through the use of communication support workers in class and in one-to-one discussions.
- Learners know how to keep safe online and understand the risks of cyber bullying. They know whom to go to if they have concerns. Staff ensure that learners are able to travel safely to work experience placements and around the campus with minimal support. Learners adhere to and demonstrate good health and safety practices in work experience and in practical workshops.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130676
Type of provider	Further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5,900
Principal	Karen Spencer
Telephone number	01279 868000
Website	www.harlow-college.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	446	131	684	229	1442	145	13	11
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	103	52	146	164	2	26		
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	128							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. 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

Rebecca Perry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Winchcombe	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Preston	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Goodwin	Ofsted Inspector
Saskia Niderost	Ofsted Inspector
Shane Langthorne	Her Majesty's Inspector

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