

Inspection of Esher Sixth Form College

Inspection dates:

20 to 23 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Education programmes for young people	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Esher Sixth Form College is a 16 to 19 academy based in Surrey and has one campus. The college achieved academy status in 2019. It enrolls learners from Surrey and a number of London boroughs.

Esher Sixth Form College provides a broad range of A-level subjects and vocational courses. Learners join the college from 119 schools. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 2,100 16 to 18 full-time learners. Of these, 1377 learners study purely A-level courses, 96 study vocational programmes and 623 study a mixed programme with a combination of the two. There were 28 learners with an education, health and care plan and 12 current learners in receipt of high needs funding. There are four learners who are looked after children.

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

Learners have exceptionally positive attitudes towards their education. They thrive in a culture of high expectations set by leaders and teachers. Learners attend well and build their confidence and resilience quickly. Teachers use a range of effective strategies that help new learners to quickly form positive relations with their peers and settle into college life. As a result, learners are highly motivated, committed to their studies and thoroughly enjoy their time at Esher Sixth Form College.

Learners value the frequent, high-quality feedback they receive from teachers which helps them to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Learners use this feedback quickly and successfully to improve the quality of their work.

Learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful and make rapid progress with their learning. Staff prepare learners very well for their next steps in learning or work. Almost all learners move on to university, an apprenticeship or work. Teachers and support staff support learners with special educational needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds very effectively. Learners speak warmly of the approachability and care of staff, who rapidly put in place measures that help those who need support. Almost all learners make exceptional progress with their studies and achieve their qualifications.

Learners thrive in, and value, the inclusive and respectful culture staff create. They learn in detail about equality of opportunity and diversity, and adopt exemplary behaviour both in class and around the campus. Learners feel safe on and outside the campus and benefit from the tutorial sessions which help them understand how to stay safe. Learners appreciate learning about topics such as sexual harm and consent which they find useful, and which contribute to their positive attitudes.

Learners participate enthusiastically in the opportunities to extend their learning beyond their qualifications, which helps them to develop their personal and social skills very well. Learners positively involve themselves in wider community opportunities such as collecting for a local food bank. Many learners, including those with high needs, develop their debating skills effectively in 'Model United Nations' sessions where they debate topics affecting the world today. Learners participate in 'wellbeing for success' and a public speaking qualification which improve their confidence and resilience well. As a result of these activities, learners develop a strong understanding of wider society and learn how to become active and responsible citizens.

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

Leaders, managers and staff plan and sequence the curriculum diligently and successfully, which ensures learners develop substantial new knowledge and skills. Staff revisit topics frequently to build on learners' knowledge and help them grow in confidence. For example, in A-level photography, learners learn basic camera skills by shooting pictures on automatic mode and then learn how to control depth of field manually. This helps them to develop their creativity swiftly, which builds their confidence and enjoyment in the subject. In A-level English literature, learners work collaboratively, discussing the content of written pieces and drafting paragraphs intelligently, which develops their confidence to write skilfully about the texts that they study.

Teachers explain new concepts to learners clearly and use a wide range of inspiring activities to enhance learning. Teachers expertly break down complex ideas into smaller, more easily understood components that help learners to build their understanding over time. Teachers use everyday examples highly effectively to illustrate theories and concepts until learners are secure in their understanding. As a result, learners learn new concepts quickly and participate fully in learning. For example, in A-level biology, teachers use acronyms such as 'OIL RIG' to help learners remember key concepts such as, in photosynthesis, 'oxidation is loss, reduction is gain'. In A-level geography, teachers share their knowledge as subject examiners very well to help learners develop their examination technique.

Teachers use assessment to understand learners' progress very well. They intervene swiftly to support learners if they fall behind. Teachers offer valuable and effective catch-up lessons, which learners participate in willingly. Teachers set aspirational targets for learners, which they review frequently to ensure they are challenging and inspire learners. Teachers provide constructive and motivational feedback when reviewing targets so that learners know what they need to do to improve further, which most do.

Leaders have ensured that all teaching is of high quality. As a result, almost all learners enjoy their learning and make excellent progress. Teachers create positive learning environments which enable learners to flourish. They routinely help learners prepare for subsequent lessons by setting useful research tasks. Teachers then use lesson time to check learners' understanding carefully, identify any misconceptions and deepen learning quickly by moving on to more challenging aspects of the curriculum. Learners greatly value this approach, become confident about their subject knowledge, and make rapid progress in developing their skills and knowledge.

Leaders design the curriculum skilfully to ensure it fosters and enhances learners' personal growth and development as well as their academic knowledge. Learners develop rapidly the skills they require to be successful on their courses. They use subject terminology with fluency and confidence, work well in groups, listen closely,

and respond maturely. Learners value the personal development programme, which helps them to develop their wider skills and supports their progression. They become exceptional ambassadors for Esher Sixth Form College.

Teachers and mentors understand learners' support needs extremely well. They adapt their teaching effectively to enable learners to participate fully in lessons. For example, teachers ensure that learners with visual impairments have a scribe and have printed material enlarged. As a result, learners with support needs rapidly gain confidence, independence and employability skills. They achieve at least as well as their peers, or better. While learners with high needs benefit from high-quality academic support and improve their social, communication skills and emotional regulation, leaders are developing additional monitoring processes to review the impact of support on non-academic outcomes. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Leaders have developed highly effective partnerships with local organisations which help them to plan and develop the curriculum to meet the needs of learners. For example, they work successfully with the Surrey chamber of commerce to identify skills gaps in technologies and the service needs economy. Leaders use this information well to develop the vocational curriculum, which provides learners with the skills employers are looking for. For example, leaders recently made changes to the level 3 extended certificate in the film, television and video production media curriculum so learners could develop the technical skills required in the industry.

Leaders and managers have devised highly effective and robust quality assurance processes, which ensures they maintain the outstanding quality of education. Leaders identify teachers' training needs carefully and design a tailored and highly effective programme of development for teachers which enables them to improve their teaching skills quickly and successfully. For example, where teachers have demonstrated highly successful classroom practice, they share this with fellow teachers in targeted development sessions. Staff talk positively about working in a local college consortium, which enables them to share best practice with teachers from other organisations.

Staff are proud to work at the college. They value the supportive and respectful culture and inclusive environment which leaders work hard and successfully to create. Leaders continue to teach alongside their leadership responsibilities, which helps them to understand the role of teachers. Leaders ensure staff have an effective work-life balance, which staff value highly. Staff rightly feel that leaders lead by example and are visible and approachable. Staff feel valued and thoroughly enjoy working at Esher Sixth Form College.

Leaders benefit from strong oversight from highly experienced and knowledgeable trustees. Trustees understand their responsibilities and provide very effective support and challenge for leaders. Trustees shadow learners and visit lessons with them, which helps them to understand the quality of education learners receive. Trustees challenge senior leaders very effectively to ensure that staff quickly identify and fill gaps in learners' knowledge as a result of the pandemic.

Leaders and teachers ensure all learners benefit from well-planned and relevant work experience or work-related activities which help them to develop valuable skills and consider their future opportunities. For example, learners develop teamwork skills when shadowing a psychologist and improve their communication skills by working with staff and children at a local nursery. Learners who were unable to visit a workplace due to the pandemic benefited from the useful virtual work experience opportunities they received.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that designated safeguarding leads are suitably trained and knowledgeable. Learners and staff feel safe and know who to contact if they have a concern. Not all learners recall fully their learning on local risks. Leaders use their comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures, including robust monitoring systems, successfully to ensure learners and staff are safe. Leaders and managers recruit staff safely. Designated teachers support looked after children very well. Staff keep detailed records of safeguarding incidents and work effectively with external agencies where necessary.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145006
Address	Weston Green Road Thames Ditton Surrey KT7 0JB
Contact number	02083980291
Website	www.esher.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Dan Hards
Provider type	16 to 19 academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	No subcontractors

Information about this inspection

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

Inspection team

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