

West Thames College Celebrates Outstanding Ofsted Rating COVER STORY PAGE 3 Skills+Logistics Centre Hosts Business Leaders for the King's is Believing Visit PAGE 8-9 Aspire Careers Event
Connects Employers
with the Next Generation
of Talent
PAGE 12



WELCOME TO **WEST THAMES**

TRACY AUST, CEO & PRINCIPAL, **WELCOMES YOU TO OUR MAKING WAVES - SPRING EDITION!**

Dear Reader,

This year, we have reached a truly remarkable milestone at West Thames College—one that reflects the dedication, resilience, and collective brilliance of our entire community. I'm absolutely thrilled to share with you that in December 2024, Ofsted graded us as Outstanding which is the highest judgement that can be awarded and we did it!

For those of you who may not be familiar with the Ofsted process, this result came after a rigorous inspection, and it marks West Thames College as one of the top-performing further education colleges in the country. Ofsted praised our "highly inclusive, calm and welcoming environments at both campuses," our students, noting they "behave impeccably" and interact with respect and harmony, our "exceptional support for students," our "ambitious curriculum," and "culture of high expectations," our "strong commitment to meeting skills needs" and the fact that we are "proactive and respected partners who play a lead role in the local borough and across west London." This accolade is a testament not just to our outstanding teaching and learning, but also to the care, respect, and inclusivity that define our College culture and makes us who we are.

This achievement belongs to all of us and it reflects a real team effort from our amazing students, our dedicated staff, our college governors, our partners and parents/carers. I'd like to extend an enormous thank you to everyone.

This Outstanding rating is not only a milestone for our College-but also, for me personally, as the CEO & Principal of West Thames. It is with mixed emotions that I share my news that I will be taking early retirement in July 2025 and therefore ending my journey at the College but what a journey it's been.

I have had 26 and half wonderful years working at

West Thames and it has been an absolute privilege to have been the CEO & Principal for the past 9 and half years. When I first arrived back in November 1998, as an A Level Economics, Accounts and Business teacher, I had no idea that this is where I'd be 26 years later. Yet, here I am and I wouldn't change a thing. It's been incredible and I would not have wanted to do this anywhere else. Everyone says that their organisation is special but West Thames really is. The students, the staff, our partners and stakeholders are collectively what makes this the best place to learn, work, grow and enjoy.

I am so incredibly proud of what our students achieve and not just the qualifications but the skills they develop and the fantastic careers they go on to have. The care from our staff is second to none, their tireless commitment to ensuring that every single student who walks through the door has an outstanding experience is unwavering. None of this would be possible without the tremendous support of our governors, our partners and stakeholders. Whilst I am sad to be leaving, the time is right and I know that West Thames will continue to go from strength to strength under their new leadership.

Looking to the future, my hope is simple but heartfelt and that is that West Thames College continues to inspire, to motivate, to be aspirational and to remain a place where students are at the core of everything. Colleges like ours, transform lives and give students the opportunity to excel and make their dreams a reality. Don't ever stop doing this West Thames.

Finally, I'd like to say a huge thank you for allowing me to be part of this extraordinary community. It has been the greatest privilege of my career to serve as your CEO & Principal.

With deepest gratitude,

. Awt

WEST THAMES COLLEGE CELEBRATES **DUTSTANDING OFSTED RATING**



West Thames College has achieved an Outstanding overall rating in its latest Ofsted inspection, conducted in December 2024, marking a major milestone in its "Journey to Outstanding."

Ofsted rated the college Outstanding in seven of the eight key areas, including quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, and provision for learners with high needs. Apprenticeships received a Good rating, and the College's contribution to meeting skills needs was described as strong.

Tracy Aust, CEO & Principal, stated:

"I am absolutely delighted that we've achieved this Outstanding grade. This is a true testament to the hard work, dedication and passion of our amazing students, staff, governors and partners and it was fantastic that Ofsted was able to witness this first hand. We've been on a Journey to Outstanding but this is by no means the end. We will continue to put our students first, to be ambitious, to have high expectations and to serve the needs of our communities. I am incredibly proud of the diverse, inclusive, successful College that is West Thames."

Stuart McGeoch, Chair of Governors, added:

"Categorisation as Outstanding by Ofsted is a well-deserved reward for three years of really hard work by the staff, management and Board of West Thames. In that time period, the overriding mantra at every stage has been to focus on the creation of an outstanding student experience and the comments of the Ofsted inspectors make clear that is exactly what has been achieved. We look forward to maintaining that in coming years and building on it as we continue to develop

our contribution to the local skills environment in West London."

The inspection report highlighted the College's inclusive and welcoming environment, where students "behave impeccably" and are highly motivated. Young learners benefit from industry-connected, hands-on learning experiences, while adult learners, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, experience "life changing" opportunities. Apprentices acquire substantial technical knowledge from sector experts.

Support for learners with high needs was praised for fostering independence and inclusion. Inspectors noted that "leaders and managers have high expectations of learners and apprentices" and maintain a "relentless focus on quality improvement."

The College was also recognised for strong collaboration with local employers and authorities, aligning curriculum content to regional and national skills demands.

West Thames College continues its commitment to excellence, aiming to remain a leading provider of further education and skills in London.

To read the full Ofsted report, scan this QR code:



THE INSPIRING **JOURNEY** OF OUR STAFF AND STUDENTS TO OUTSTANDING

West Thames College celebrates its recent Outstanding Ofsted rating by spotlighting the inspiring journeys of staff and students whose passion, resilience, and commitment to excellence have helped shape the college's vibrant, inclusive community.



Janeel's Journey to Outstanding

Janeel, a Mathematics Level 1 student at West Thames College, represents the spirit of determination behind the college's Outstanding Ofsted rating. After joining just four months ago to complete her secondary school education, Janeel has made remarkable progress. "I got the opportunity and wish to do so, so that I can have a better chance at future jobs," she explains. Her biggest motivator? Her teacher. "She's very understanding and patient... even from the beginning when I wanted to give up, she encouraged me to push myself." With growing confidence, Janeel now embraces mathematics not just as a subject but as a life tool: "More than 80% of our daily lives has some maths in it... it expands my way of thinking." She sees West Thames as a place of purpose and empowerment: "It gives a meaning to life." Looking ahead, she hopes to showcase her growth in future Ofsted visits and inspire others: "My achievements should be enough encouragement for others."



Anna's Journey to Outstanding

For Anna, a second-year T-Level Digital Production, Design, and Development student at West Thames College, technology isn't just a subject—it's a passion. "I've always loved technology and how it shapes the world," she shares. Her curiosity led her to a course where designing websites and solving real-world problems has been both creatively and intellectually rewarding. "Designing websites and solving problems has taught me to think critically while expressing myself in new ways," she says. A key milestone was completing her first website from scratch: "The sense of accomplishment was huge, and my teachers were so supportive." Anna values the practical nature of her studies, which mirror industry standards and foster teamwork. "This course is giving me hands-on experience with real-world projects and tools." West Thames's Outstanding Ofsted rating filled her with pride: "It shows that all the hard work here is recognised." She describes the college as "supportive, friendly, and exciting"—the perfect launchpad for techminded students.



Alix's Journey to Outstanding

Alix Brewer, Specialist Makeup tutor at West Thames College, has played a vital role in the college's Outstanding Ofsted rating through her creative passion and industry insight. Teaching for six years, Alix draws inspiration from science fiction and the transformative power of makeup. "Makeup can transform not just a face, but an entire character or world," she shares. Her approach blends technical skill with storytelling, pushing students to innovate and express individuality. Alumni from her department have gone on to work in period dramas, West End productions, and freelance careers. Preparing for Ofsted involved refining the curriculum to ensure relevance and inclusivity: "We focused on lessons being relevant to the changing industry... tailored to support students at all levels." She credits the success to a diverse, driven student body and strong employer links. "We celebrate and promote our diversity... that is what shines the most." For Alix, creativity and inclusivity are the heart of Outstanding education.

FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSIONER VISITS WEST THAMES COLLEGE





West Thames College was honoured to welcome **Further Education Commissioner, Shelagh Legrave** CBE, for a tour on 23 April.

The visit provided a valuable opportunity to showcase the College's exceptional facilities and discuss how recent investments are supporting local and regional priorities. These include alignment with the Local Skills Improvement Plan, meaningful collaboration with external partners, and the continued focus on student development—all of which were key factors in the College recently receiving an Outstanding rating from Ofsted.

Shelagh Legrave toured the Supported Learning department before exploring the College's Creative Industries spaces. Her visit included stops at the Animation suite, TV Studio, Beauty and Laser rooms, the Endeavour Theatre, and the Health and Care simulation suite. Throughout the day, she engaged with staff and students, dropping into sessions to hear firsthand about their experiences and aspirations—experiences that reflect the high standards recognised in the College's Outstanding rating.

Reflecting on the visit, West Thames College CEO & Principal Tracy Aust said: "We were really pleased to welcome the FE Commissioner, Shelagh Legrave CBE to West Thames College and have the opportunity to meet our staff and students as well as having a tour of our amazing campus. It was great to be able to share some of the work that our staff and students have been engaged in over recent months and of course our Outstanding Ofsted result too. Thank you to Shelagh for a really positive visit."

The Commissioner's visit highlighted the College's ongoing commitment to excellence and its role in delivering highquality education that meets the evolving needs of the community—something now formally recognised by Ofsted's Outstanding judgement.



RUTH CADBURY MP VISITS **WEST THAMES COLLEGE** TO DISCUSS LIFELONG LEARNING







West Thames College was delighted to welcome Ruth Cadbury, MP for Brentford & Isleworth and Chair of the Transport Select Committee, for a visit focused on lifelong learning and the role of further education in supporting young people and the local community

Ruth met with CEO & Principal Tracy Aust, along with student representatives from the College's Student Voice group. The discussion explored both the challenges and ambitions of West Thames College, particularly in the context of enhancing lifelong learning opportunities through collaboration with the Local Authority and Government—a commitment recently recognised through the College's Outstanding Ofsted rating.

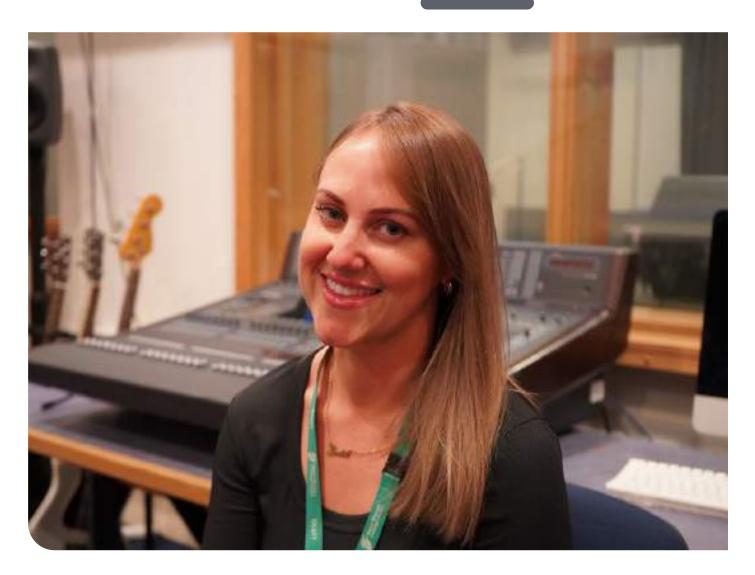
Ruth said: "I really enjoyed hearing from the students at West Thames College today - I met with CEO Tracy Aust first, who talked me through some of the challenges facing the college & how they working with the LA (Local Authority) & Government to help improve life long learning."

The visit also provided an opportunity for students to share their personal experiences and aspirations directly with their local MP, offering insights into the barriers young people face and the support they need to succeed—insights that continue to inform the College's Outstanding provision and inclusive approach to education.

Tracy added: "As always, it was a great opportunity to update Ruth with not only our journey to Outstanding but also the current challenges and opportunities we face. Ruth was able to hear first-hand from our students about their experiences, aspirations and the challenges they face as young people. We really appreciate Ruth's continued support for West Thames."

West Thames College remains committed to empowering learners and strengthening ties with local and national leaders—an ethos at the heart of the Outstanding judgement awarded by Ofsted.

SCARLETT LEPSON HONOURED WITH JACK PETCHEY LEADER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING STUDENT SUPPORT



Scarlett Jepson, a Student Learning Advisor (SLA) in Media, Music, and Performing Arts at West Thames College, has been honoured with a Jack Petchey Leader Award in recognition of her exceptional support and dedication to students.

Earlier this year, Scarlett received the award for the positive and lasting impact she has made in helping students grow both academically and personally. Known for her commitment and encouragement, Scarlett plays a key role in guiding students through challenges and helping them unlock their potential.

With her unwavering support, she helps students "improve and chase their own dreams."

Scarlett's recognition reflects her ability to connect with students and support them in a meaningful way—whether through academic assistance, mentorship, or simply being someone they can rely on. Her work continues to inspire confidence and ambition in those she supports, contributing to the culture of care and excellence highlighted in the College's recent Outstanding Ofsted report.

The Jack Petchey Leader Award celebrates adults who go above and beyond to inspire young people—and Scarlett is a shining example of that.

A huge congratulations, Scarlett—you are proof that when you lift others up, you rise too!

West Thames College is proud to celebrate staff like Scarlett who make a real difference in the lives of students and help deliver the Outstanding support the College is known for.

SKILLS + LOGISTICS CENTRE HOSTS BUSINESS LEADERS FOR THE KING'S SEEING IS BELIEVING VISIT

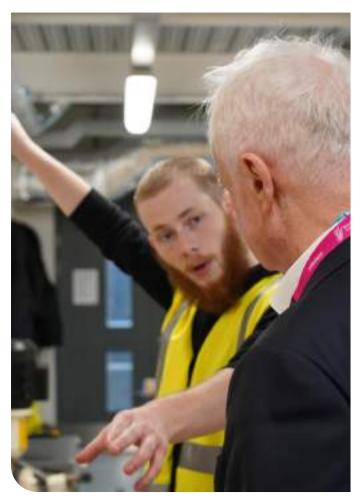


On 6 March, West Thames College played a central role in The King's Seeing is Believing visit to Hounslow—an initiative by Business in the Community (BITC), the King's Responsible Business Network, aimed at driving long-term social and economic transformation. Led by John Bason, Chair of Primark and Chair of BITC's **Hounslow Pride of Place Partnership, and Mary** Macleod, CEO of BITC, the visit brought together senior business leaders and community representatives to explore challenges in the borough, especially in Feltham.

A key segment took place at West Thames College's Skills Centre in Feltham, where student ambassadors guided tours showcasing vocational training programmes in carpentry, plumbing, and logistics. The visit highlighted the need for workforce development and addressed misconceptions about career pathways in these sectors. Business leaders engaged directly with students, staff, and apprentices—seeing firsthand how collaboration between education and industry can open effective employment opportunities.

Speaking at the event, Kris Martin, Senior Construction Manager at Telford Homes and Chair of the Chartered Institute of Building, London Hub Committee, emphasised bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world experience.

He stated: "As employers, we must bridge the gap between education and industry experience. Too often, students complete their courses but struggle to secure apprenticeships or jobs, leading to frustration. Working closely with







colleges ensures training aligns with industry needs, from sustainability initiatives to regulations. It's not just about technical skills; students need exposure to real-world expectations."

Highlighting the initiative's impact, Ayah Thomas—last year's Student of the Year for Construction & Building Trades and now an apprentice at St George's Fields—shared her journey: "I wanted a job, and I knew an apprenticeship would guarantee me a place in the industry. It's been great-learning, applying skills directly, and building my future step by step. Eventually, I want to run my own painting and decorating business, creating opportunities for women in trades."

Reflecting on her experience, Ayah added: "There's always a fear of being judged, and outdated perceptions still exist. But I use that as motivation. Some people laughed when I chose this career, but now I look at where I am and take it as a confidence boost."

The day ended with a reflective session where business leaders discussed insights from the visit and explored further corporate support for community and educational partnerships.

West Thames College CEO & Principal Tracy Aust remarked: "It was a fantastic event, and we heard some truly powerful stories throughout the day. The visit showcased not only the challenges our students and local residents face, but also the transformative potential of collaboration between businesses and community groups. I am excited for the next steps on this BITC journey."

West Thames College remains committed to equipping students with the skills and opportunities needed for successful careers.

WEST THAMES COLLEGE EARNS **GOOD BUSINESS CHARTER** ACCREDITATION

West Thames College is proud to be the first further education college in the country to achieve accreditation with the Good Business Charter (GBC), a prestigious recognition of its commitment to ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible business practices.



The College's leadership team worked diligently to meet the GBC's high standards, showcasing West Thames College's holistic approach to responsible business practices—an approach that complements the College's recent Outstanding Ofsted rating, which recognised excellence across all areas of provision.

The College's Head of Human Resources, Louise Owen, said: "West Thames is proud to be the first further education College to achieve this accreditation. We hope that this is a clear sign of our commitment to making a positive impact in the business world. We want to continue to build on the strong foundations that we have built for our staff, and a sustainable and ethical future."

The College's CEO and Principal, Tracy Aust, said: "I am delighted that West Thames College has successfully achieved the Good Business Charter accreditation. Another first for us as a College and for Further Education. It's really important in our role as an education provider and as a business to role model strong ethical, sustainable and socially responsible practice and this accreditation is clear recognition of this. I am really looking forward to continuing our work with GBC in sharing best practice and hopefully bringing others on board."

The announcement came during the GBC's Good Business Fortnight (3–14 February 2025), a national event celebrating organisations committed to responsible business practices. West Thames College now joins other leading institutions like Aviva, TSB, and the University of York in championing a fairer, more sustainable future.

By achieving this accreditation, West Thames College reinforces its mission to prioritise people, planet, and ethical progress across all areas of its operations.



FRESH START STUDENTS RAISE FUNDS AND AWARENESS TO STAND UP AGAINST KNIFE CRIME



West Thames College's Fresh Start students, aged 14-16, have taken an inspiring step to raise awareness about knife crime by organising their own charity cake sale.

Demonstrating both initiative and compassion, the students planned the entire event themselves and raised £85. The proceeds will be donated to RE N-GAGE, a charity committed to preventing serious youth crime through outreach and education.

The event served as more than just a fundraiser. It provided a platform for young people to open up conversations around a serious issue affecting many communities across London and the UK. The students used the opportunity to show solidarity, educate their peers, and advocate for more resources and discussions on the topic—an approach that reflects the values and student engagement noted in the College's recent Outstanding Ofsted rating.

Vikki Evans, Lecturer in Hairdressing, shared: "This is a fantastic initiative that the students planned and organised themselves. Raising awareness and having open discussions about this issue is so important, and we are incredibly proud of them for making a difference."

The sale drew strong support from staff and students alike, further highlighting the importance of youth-led actions in tackling real-world issues. These moments of initiative and leadership are just one example of the inclusive, studentfocused environment recognised as Outstanding. Many students expressed interest in doing even more in the future, through additional events and educational initiatives.

Ryan, one of the organising students, said: "It's important to stand up against knife crime. We want to raise even more money for charities that spread awareness, and we'd love to welcome more guest speakers to educate us on these important issues."

ASPIRE CAREERS EVENT CONNECTS **EMPLOYERS** WITH THE **NEXT GENERATION OF TALENT**







Ofsted rated the college Outstanding in seven of the eight key areas, including quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, and provision for learners with high needs. Apprenticeships received a Good rating, and the College's contribution to meeting skills needs was described as strong.

Our annual Aspire Careers Event once again proved to be a standout opportunity for employers and students alike. bringing together over 65 leading companies and hundreds of ambitious students eager to launch their careers.

Held in March, the event provided a dynamic platform for recruitment, networking, and knowledge-sharing. Employers had the chance to connect directly with emerging talent, host expert-led masterclasses, and

showcase what makes their organisations unique. From tech and finance to creative industries and engineering, a diverse range of sectors was represented-reflecting the broad interests of attending students and the high standards that recently contributed to the College's Outstanding Ofsted

A standout event highlight was the series of masterclasses delivered by industry professionals. These sessions offered students valuable insights into various career paths and current industry trends, while giving employers a chance to engage with attendees in a meaningful way. Events like Aspire underline the College's commitment to equipping students with the skills, confidence, and connections that support the Outstanding outcomes highlighted in the Ofsted report.

Aspire has built a strong reputation as a launchpad for student careers and a vital touchpoint for companies looking to build their employer brand among the next generation of professionals.

EMPLOYABILITY EXPO CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Last month's Employability Expo at West Thames College offered ESOL students and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) candidates a valuable opportunity to explore career options, connect with employers, and gain practical advice to support their job journeys.

Last month's Employability Expo at West Thames College offered ESOL students and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) candidates a valuable opportunity to explore career options, connect with employers, and gain practical advice to support their job iournevs.

The event brought together a wide range of employers and industry professionals who offered sector insights, guidance, and job readiness tips to attendees. It created a space where students could build confidence, ask questions, and begin mapping out their next steps in employment—demonstrating the kind of inclusive, learner-focused support that contributed to the College's recent Outstanding Ofsted rating.

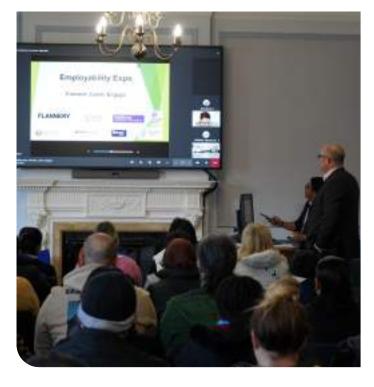
Addressing the audience, Mark Byerley, CQTM at the College, said: "Tap into the wealth of knowledge in this room. Networking is your key to understanding industry trends and accessing new opportunities."

The College welcomed an impressive line-up of contributors, including:

- Flannery Plant Hire Construction and Plant Hire insights
- Heathrow Employment & Skills Academy Vibrant aviation pathways
- Mothers Into Work Empowering career comebacks
- North West London Integrated Care System (ICS) Pathways in healthcare
- VolkerFitzpatrick Luton DART Construction transition support
- Morgan Hunt Career mapping and growth
- Reed Recruitment Expert CV & interview tips

The Employability Expo highlighted the College's commitment to supporting learners at all stages of their journey into work. Events like this are part of what makes West Thames College's employability offer Outstanding in both intent and impact, as recognised by Ofsted. With engaged students and expert advice on offer, the event proved a successful and inspiring step toward brighter futures.

West Thames College looks forward to building on this momentum with future employability events.





EMPLOYER ADVISORY BOARDS AT WEST THAMES COLLEGE

West Thames College is making exciting strides in bridging the gap between education and industry through our Employer Advisory Boards. These collaborations ensure that our curriculum aligns with real-world demands, equipping students with the skills needed for future success—and directly contributing to the Outstanding quality of education recognised in our latest Ofsted report.

Recently, we teamed up with leaders from 2Toucans, Hampton Brands Limited, West London Chambers of Commerce, Cisco UK, and I Choose Local. By gathering insights from these industry experts, we are shaping a curriculum that empowers students and prepares them for a competitive job market.

The advisory boards provide a platform for open discussions between education providers and employers, helping to ensure that students are well-prepared for the workforce. These partnerships are a key feature of the College's forward-thinking approach, supporting the development of the highly relevant and responsive provision noted in our Outstanding Ofsted rating.

West Thames College is proud of these partnerships, and we look forward to continuing our efforts to align education with industry needs, helping students thrive in their careers.







FORMER STUDENT AND EASYJET **TRAINEE** INSPIRES THE NEXT **GENERATION**



Eesha, a 25-year-old business graduate trainee at EasyJet, recently returned to West Thames College to share her journey from college student to a promising career with one of Europe's leading airlines.

Reflecting on her academic journey and career pathway, she delivered invaluable insights to current students, emphasising the importance of both ambition and enjoyment in education.

In her role at EasyJet, Eesha is part of a dynamic two-year program that immerses her in multiple departments, each for a period of six months.

"This role is incredibly diverse," Eesha explained. "It allows me to explore different facets of the business, with the opportunity to choose the departments that align with my career interests."

This flexibility, she says, gives her a chance to understand the business from various perspectives, a testament to her adaptability and curiosity—traits she encouraged students to develop.

Returning to her College was a nostalgic experience for Eesha, who fondly recalled her days studying Travel and Tourism.

"College was memorable," she said, smiling, "It's amazing to come back and see that the heart of the place hasn't changed."

She highlighted how her studies prepared her well for a career in a highly competitive industry, with practical lessons that continue to resonate in her professional life. Her success story is one of many that reflect the real-world impact of West Thames College's Outstanding teaching and curriculum, recently recognised by Ofsted.

Rita Rosemont Hachani, Eesha's former lecturer in Travel & Aviation, shared her admiration for Eesha's determination.

"Eesha was incredibly hardworking and driven. I came to the college wondering what impact I could make, and she gave me purpose," Hachani reflected. "She had a clear mission, and I knew she would strive. I'll be watching closely over the next two years to see all that she accomplishes."

