

Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130662

Name of lead inspector: Sue Harrison HMI

Last day of inspection: 3 February 2012

Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: Vane Terrace
Darlington
County Durham
DL3 7AU

Telephone number: 01325 461315

Information about the provider

1. Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College serves a diverse community. It recruits learners from South West Durham, North Yorkshire and Teesside, as well as from the borough of Darlington. Other post-16 providers in the local authority include a general further education college, one 11 to 18 school and various small work-based providers. The proportion of Darlington pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is around the national average. The rate of youth unemployment is above average.

2. The college is the major provider of GCE AS- and A-level courses for young people in the area. The vast majority of learners are aged 16 to 18 and are following advanced-level programmes. The college also offers a small number of intermediate-level courses. About 56% of the learners aged 16 to 18 and 63% of the adult learners are female. Adult learners mainly follow part-time evening programmes. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is 4.6%, which is higher than the local population.

3. The college's mission is to 'achieve and maintain excellence as a provider of education and, as a result, enable all students to progress successfully to the next stage of their lives'.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<p>Provision for young learners:</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p>	<p>14 part-time learners 1,821 full-time learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners:</p> <p>Further education (19+)</p>	<p>272 part-time learners</p>
<p>Adult and community learning</p>	<p>160 part-time learners</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	Grade
Sport, leisure, travel and tourism	3
Visual and performing arts and media	1
Social sciences and history	1
Languages, literature and culture	2

Overall effectiveness

- This is an inclusive college that takes learners from a range of different backgrounds and, in the vast majority of cases, helps them to progress successfully to university, employment or further training. The quality of provision is outstanding, with good teaching and learning, an outstanding range of provision to meet needs and excellent support systems. Partnership work is particularly strong and has contributed significantly to raising aspirations in the area and ensuring students are on the correct courses. Outcomes for learners are good and improving. The college recovered well from a slight dip in success rates in 2009/10 and success rates are now high on many courses. Students make good progress overall against their starting points but progress is too variable across the college. Senior leaders and managers set a culture of high expectations that is fully supported by staff. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and arrangements to safeguard learners are outstanding. The college provides a welcoming, high-quality learning environment.

Main findings

- Students achieve well at the college. Success rates on most courses are at or above the national average for sixth form colleges. Learners generally make good progress against their starting points, although this varies between subjects and qualifications. The proportion of students gaining high grades in GCE A-level examinations is greater for female than male learners, though the gap is narrowing.
- Students enjoy going to college. It provides a very safe and welcoming learning environment. Learners attend regularly and gain an excellent range of skills that successfully prepares them for the next stage of their lives. The proportion of learners gaining places at university is high and other students progress successfully to employment or further training.
- Students make an excellent contribution to the life of the college and the wider community. They are fully represented on key college committees and appointments panels. Their extensive involvement in volunteering activities benefits local organisations and international charities, as well as helping them to develop work-related skills.
- The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is mostly planned well to meet the needs of different groups of learners. Teachers and students make extensive and effective use of information and learning technology. Many lessons are good or outstanding but a minority is less successful at helping learners to achieve fully.
- The college places a high priority on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The strength of the internal system of lesson observations is in the detailed discussions which allow teachers to focus on their teaching practice. However, in a minority of cases, observers are over-generous in their judgements and do not identify sharply enough where teaching could be improved further or the extent to which learning is taking place.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners very effectively. This, and the way the provision is developed with schools and other colleges, are both outstanding features. As a result of excellent partnership work, the provision is carefully tailored to meet the needs of individual learners which significantly boosts motivation. The college is a key player in the successful strategy to raise attainment and aspirations in the area. Students benefit from an outstanding enrichment programme.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements to help students make the transition from school to college are excellent. Personal tutors have very good knowledge of students. Pastoral and academic support are both strong. Staff and students make good use of the system to monitor learners' progress against their targets.
- Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. The college consistently meets ambitious recruitment targets and generally meets ambitious targets for learners' success rates. The college is characterised by a culture of

high expectations, coupled with an environment that values every individual's contribution.

- Arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. Extensive staff training and excellent links with external agencies make a good contribution to safeguarding. Learners are involved in promoting understanding of health and safety, especially e-safety.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers analyse carefully any gaps in achievement between different groups of learners and take action where appropriate. Respect for, and celebration of, different cultures are fully promoted. A vibrant equal opportunities committee oversees policies and procedures but the impact of equality measures is not always monitored thoroughly.
- Student representation is strong on college committees and on the governing body. Students' views are taken seriously and acted upon. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Findings are generally in line with the inspection judgements. However, the college overstated some key strengths in its self-assessment report. Quality assurance arrangements are not sufficiently comprehensive and action plans are not always sharp enough to enable close monitoring of progress.
- Financial management is strong. The college provides a very good environment for learning, which is welcoming and well resourced. Staff development is good. Best practice is successfully shared within strong subjects but not sufficiently with the few areas that are not performing as well.

What does Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor carefully the impact of actions to bring about greater consistency in the extent to which all learners make good or better progress against their prior attainment.
- Extend the good and excellent practice in many lessons by ensuring all lesson observations focus enough on the extent to which learning is taking place.
- Strengthen self-assessment by ensuring the quality-assurance strategy provides sufficient evidence on all key processes and by developing more incisive action planning.
- Develop more extensive arrangements to promote the sharing of best practice to accelerate improvements in those subjects performing less well than the best.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the friendly atmosphere, which is informal but structured
- having their views heard
- the very good bridging course before the start of college
- the wide range of courses and extra-curricular opportunities, enrichment activities and the social aspects of college life
- exceptional support from staff, including mentoring, workshops and revision classes
- structured teaching and interesting lessons
- good facilities and resources, including the library and computers
- help with UCAS applications.

What learners would like to see improved:

- printing costs
- parking facilities
- a minority of teaching
- more social spaces
- canteen prices.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

5. The college generally meets or exceeds its key targets. At all levels, the large majority of staff are well motivated and contribute positively to securing improvement. The college responded very effectively to a dip in success rates in 2009/10 and has re-established an upward trajectory in performance. A large proportion of improvements targeted last year were achieved. Managers are quick to identify underperforming courses, although the impact of the tailored approach to improving their performance is variable. Managers and teachers make good use of the views of students to identify where to make further improvements. Resources are sufficient to support continued improvement. The college is continuing to work on improving self-assessment which was the key area for improvement at the last inspection. Self-assessment is satisfactory but has not yet resulted in a comprehensive quality-improvement tool.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

6. Learners achieve well at the college. Success rates on most courses are at or above the national average. In 2009/10 the overall success rate for long courses was lower than the previous year and was in line with the national average. In 2010/11 it improved to two percentage points above the average for sixth form colleges. Retention rates on courses for learners aged 16 to 18 are high. Pass rates for these learners on advanced courses are above average, and significantly above on intermediate-level courses. Retention on courses for adult learners is below average. Pass rates for adults are well above average on advanced- and intermediate-level courses.
7. Learners make good progress against their starting points, although there is too much variation across qualifications and subjects. Overall, learners make better progress on AS courses than on A2. The proportion of learners gaining high grades in GCE A-level subjects increased in 2011 to match the national average. Female students on these courses perform better than males in terms of the number achieving high grades, although actions to address this are starting to narrow the gap. On intermediate-level courses, the proportion of learners gaining high grades is well above average for males and females.
8. Students enjoy going to college, they feel safe and show good respect for others. Attendance is high. Learners gain an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They demonstrate good literacy and numeracy skills and gain above average results in functional skills examinations. Success rates are very high for students who repeat GCSE English and mathematics courses to improve their Year 11 grade, and gain a grade A* to C.
9. Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives. They develop very good teamworking and research skills. Those who choose to work on an extended project as part of their studies achieve exceptionally well. A very high

proportion of learners progress to a wide range of universities, with the majority of learners gaining their first choice. Other learners progress to further education courses, employment, apprenticeships and the armed services.

10. Learners make an excellent contribution to the college and to the local and wider communities. Many learners are involved in voluntary and charitable activities. For example, students on sports courses work extensively in local schools providing coaching and organising tournaments. The college hosted a recent citizenship ceremony for the town, and learners are involved in community and conservation projects in Namibia. Volunteering gives learners experience that is useful in developing employability skills.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

11. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good overall, with several examples of outstanding practice; however, there are small number of satisfactory lessons. Inspectors found good and outstanding lessons across a wide range of subjects. The majority of lessons are well planned and structured and include a variety of activities to engage learners. In these lessons, teachers use effective questioning techniques to check, consolidate and extend learning. A small number of lessons are not planned well enough to ensure all learners make sufficient progress.
12. Teachers and students use information and learning technology extensively to develop and enrich learning, both inside and outside the classroom. The college has high expectations of its students, encouraging and supporting them to succeed. Teachers use praise effectively to raise students' confidence. Learners appreciate the extensive additional sessions, such as coursework clinics and revision classes, which help them to improve.
13. Assessment arrangements are good and marked work is returned promptly. In lessons, teachers make good use of a variety of assessment methods, including practical activities and quizzes. The college is successfully developing the use of peer assessment. Feedback on learners' work is generally detailed and constructive. However, in a few cases this is not the case.
14. The college has a well developed lesson observation system which helps to improve teaching skills. Strengths and areas for improvement identified by observers are generally used effectively to identify training needs and to share good practice. In a minority of cases, college observers are over-generous in their judgements of the strengths of a lesson.
15. The college is outstanding at meeting the needs and interests of users. It offers a very wide range of advanced-level subjects. Courses are mapped carefully with local schools so that they build upon what has been learned previously. The flexibility and range of choice available to each student is outstanding, which contributes significantly to their motivation. The smaller vocational

provision, the intermediate-level courses and courses for adults are targeted very well at specific needs.

16. Students' experience and enjoyment are enhanced through an outstanding range of enrichment activities, including an extensive and popular sports programme which has gained national recognition. A vibrant Student Association adds to the cultural and communal life of the college. Students benefit from the provision of additional qualifications to enhance their employability and the opportunity to take part in very well focused work placements.
17. Partnership work is outstanding. Extensive and well established partnerships with schools, universities, civic leaders and employers are used very effectively as part of a coherent and successful strategy to raise attainment and aspirations in Darlington. As a key member of the 11 to 19 Partnership, the college has adapted its curriculum offer very well in response to the changing needs of school leavers. Excellent links with the local college of further education ensure courses are complementary.
18. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for the transition from school to college are excellent. Students speak highly of the many varied opportunities to familiarise them with the college and what it has to offer. As a result, they make well informed choices and settle in quickly, and retention rates are high.
19. Individual support needs are identified quickly. Excellent support is provided for those who need extra help with English or mathematics. Students benefit from a wide range of other support measures, including mentors and counsellors. A very effective tutorial programme provides information and support for topics such as health-related matters. Students make good use of the specialist careers services and resources, and are thoroughly prepared for submitting applications to higher education and for employment.
20. Students' progress is carefully tracked. Attendance is tightly monitored. Personal tutors know their students very well and have a thorough understanding of how well they are doing in their studies. Systems to ensure target grades are challenging and to record student progress were strengthened as a result of the dip in performance in 2009/10. Staff and students make good use of the improved system, which also provides better information for parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

21. Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. The college consistently exceeds ambitious targets for recruitment and generally meets ambitious targets for learners' success. The Principal and leadership team promote a culture of continuous improvement within an environment that values individual learners and staff. Morale and motivation are high. Senior managers have worked hard to raise the accountability of curriculum

management with much success, and they recognise and are addressing the variability that remains.

22. Governance is effective. Governors are strongly committed to the success of the college. They receive detailed information and training inputs to enable them to provide a good balance of challenge and support. Self-assessment by governors is underdeveloped.
23. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding as a result of extensive staff training and very good promotion of health and safety to students. Links with external agencies to facilitate safeguarding are exemplary. Students have produced excellent resources on e-safety and the use of the internet. Risk assessments are thorough. Staffing and recruitment policies meet government requirements.
24. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers thoroughly analyse data to identify gaps in achievement. Narrowing the gender gap that has materialised in the last two years is a clear priority. College enrichment events successfully promote awareness of diversity. The equality and diversity committee provides a strong steer for promotion across the college but the impact of equality measures is not always monitored fully and the completion of equality impact assessments is too informal.
25. Student representation is strong on college committees and the governing body. In addition, an extensive network of representatives feeds students' views through to the Student Association, which is very effective at presenting views to managers. There are many examples of changes or improvements made in response to students' views.
26. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Staff are fully involved in the process and learners' views make a significant contribution. The self-assessment report is broadly in line with inspection findings but it overstates a few key strengths. The rigour with which teaching and learning are evaluated is continuing to develop. Action plans do not always identify sufficiently clearly how success will be measured. Quality-assurance arrangements are not sufficiently comprehensive, for example, to provide rigorous analysis of key processes such as lesson planning and formative assessment.
27. Staff development fully supports the college's priorities. Good practice is shared very effectively within the stronger subjects but not extensively enough between all subjects to accelerate improvements in the few weaker areas. Financial management is strong. The college operates very efficiently. It provides an excellent learning environment and outstanding value for money.

Subject areas

Sport, Leisure, Travel and Tourism

Grade 3

Context

28. The college offers courses in sport, leisure, travel and tourism. Currently there are 301 learners aged 16 to 18. The majority of the curriculum is at advanced level with additional qualifications being offered to enhance learners' studies and employment opportunities. These include cabin crew, first aid and sports leadership awards.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good on travel and leisure courses and satisfactory on physical education courses. Success rates are above the national average for travel and leisure. Retention is above average on physical education courses but pass rates are below. Learners generally make satisfactory progress against their starting points.
- Learners demonstrate good subject knowledge. They contribute confidently in lessons and benefit from a range of activities to support their personal development. These include running a mini Olympics in local primary schools and volunteer coaching in high schools. Progression into further and higher education, employment or training is good.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, learners are actively engaged in a wide range of stimulating activities to support learning. High-quality resources are used effectively to develop learners' understanding. In one outstanding travel and tourism lesson, the learners actively participated in a realistic airline safety briefing, bringing a sense of excitement to learning.
- In the least effective lessons, there is insufficient stretch and challenge, and opportunities to consolidate learning are missed. Teachers do not always use questioning effectively to develop the more-able learners' thinking skills. However, the level of learners' interest and engagement is good in most lessons.
- Assessment is frequent and learners benefit from valuable feedback on their work. However, insufficient use is made of individual target grades to promote ambition and raise achievement and high grades.
- The college offers a wide range of subjects for learners to study and these are successfully supported by additional qualifications to enhance their learning. Learners benefit from attending 'Bridging Week' which allows them to sample a range of subjects prior to enrolment. This strategy has supported improved retention.
- Partnership links with the local community are good and learners are actively involved in a range of community-based projects. There are strong links with

local and national football associations, and the college has recently gained a national award for this aspect of its work.

- Learners receive good support. Pastoral support is strong. There is an effective mentoring programme to support the development of study skills. Learners speak highly of the 'coursework clinic' in travel and leisure. However, there is no clear strategy to reduce support gradually and create more independent learners.
- Leadership and management are good on travel and leisure courses but less effective in physical education. Although targets are set at course level, some of them lack ambition. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Course reviews are completed for each qualification and updated on a half-termly basis. However, some strengths are overstated. Staff are well supported to update their professional practice.
- Equality and diversity are positively promoted within the curriculum. In one outstanding lesson, the stereotyping of cabin crew was challenged and differing cultures recognised and promoted. Students demonstrate good understanding of equality and diversity. There is a strong culture of mutual respect within the college. Action is being taken to address the comparative underachievement of male students on some courses.
- Facilities and resources are very good. Classrooms and specialist practical areas are well equipped. Students studying the cabin crew qualification benefit from using high-quality safety equipment to develop their practical skills. Learners value the good access to computers both in and outside the classroom. Displays are high quality and used effectively in class to support learning.

What does Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Raise pass rates on the physical education courses by spreading the good practice within teaching and learning and course management that exists within leisure and tourism.
- Make better use of students' individual target grades to ensure that the more-able students are fully challenged.
- Develop greater consistency in the quality and monitoring of course action plans and ensure targets that are set are ambitious on all courses.

Visual and Performing Arts and Media

Grade 1

Context

29. The college provides a wide range of GCE AS- and A-level subjects in art and design, performing arts, media and communication studies, and a BTEC art foundation diploma. There are 1,147 enrolments. Almost all students are aged 16 to 18. The majority of courses are delivered at the main site. The college also leases accommodation in an adjacent arts centre, pending the completion of new facilities on site which are due to open in September 2012.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Success rates are above the national average on almost all courses, often well above. Students generally make good progress against their starting points, although progress measures show better performance on AS courses than on A-level courses.
- The standard of learners' work is outstanding. They use a wide range of skills and techniques to produce imaginative and creative artistic work. They are encouraged to be innovative and experimental in both visual and performing arts and they produce exciting and stimulating portfolio and performance pieces.
- Students make an excellent contribution to the college and the community. High-quality display work enhances the learning environment. Work is also displayed at events in the town centre. Media students make good use of new technology to showcase their work. Students gain confidence as a result of participating in high-quality performances throughout the year, as well as raising money for organisations such as a local hospice.
- Students' skills are further enhanced by taking part in national competitions, and from working with professional companies. They broaden their experience through educational visits in this country and abroad. The college has an artist-in-residence programme.
- Teaching and learning are good. Staff display passion and enthusiasm for their subject and most lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individuals in the group. Assessment is regular and informative. Feedback is detailed and constructive, with actions recorded for follow up on the student progress tracker.
- Staff use information and learning technology very effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Excellent practice exists in media and film studies where all course material can be accessed by students at home. In all areas, students and staff make good use of specialist and current industry-standard software.
- The range of provision to meet needs is outstanding and partnership work is strong. Media students benefit from links with the community that provide live briefs. Extensive links with schools and universities provide enrichment activities which allow students to practice skills in a range of settings.

- Care, guidance and support arrangements are outstanding. Staff work closely with schools to ensure a smooth transition into college. Staff offer curriculum visits to schools and often work on joint projects. Prospective students attending bridging-course tasters are assessed for suitability of programme. These excellent transition arrangements ensure students settle quickly at college.
- Students are fully supported by individual pastoral and subject tutorials. Mentoring and additional learning support also make a good contribution to learners' success. Systems to support students' progression after college are very effective.
- Leadership and management are good. Communication between managers and staff is regular and productive. Self-assessment is effective, with a clear focus on key performance indicators and emphasis on sharing good practice. Staff generally make good use of college systems for setting targets and monitoring the progress of individual learners. Curriculum planning is very responsive. New programmes have been introduced to meet changing needs.
- Equality and diversity are well embedded in the curriculum. Performing arts students are encouraged to explore different cultures as part of their work in music, dance and drama. Art projects displayed around the college celebrate themes of equality and diversity. Students feel safe and are free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Learners' views are collected extensively and are used very effectively in developing the provision. For example, media students were involved in discussions regarding the selection of specialist units. This resulted in a change in curriculum delivery and improved enthusiasm and student motivation.

What does Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Develop greater consistency in the rigour with which target setting and monitoring are used to ensure students' progress is good or better on all qualifications.

Social Science and History

Grade 1

Context

30. Courses are offered in GCE AS- and A-level history, geography, politics, sociology, citizenship, economics and in an AS in world development. Currently, 121 students are enrolled on citizenship courses, 69 on economics, 173 on geography, 153 on politics, 165 on sociology and 347 on history. Around 68 students follow other courses in deaf awareness and access courses. The former was not looked at as part of the inspection. Most students are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Success rates are high at GCE A level and most match or exceed the high national averages. In 2011 all students who started the A2 year in geography, economics, sociology and politics passed the course and the proportion gaining high grades exceeded national averages on all but one course. At AS level, results were closer to the national averages overall. They were above average in history and economics and well above in world development. Success rates are also high for mature students taking access courses.
- Students make good progress compared with their attainment at the start of the course. The most significant progress is made by students of government and politics. In most subjects the progress students make is more marked at A level than at AS, but in history and geography students make better progress at AS level.
- Students enjoy their courses. They are enthused by dedicated and supportive teachers who carefully plan their lessons so that students experience a variety of techniques to promote learning. Attendance is good and there are high levels of retention.
- Teaching and learning are good and much is outstanding. With rare exceptions, lessons are suitably paced but in a small number learners' interest is less well sustained. Teachers make very good use of information and learning technology to enrich their lessons with online quizzes, video clips and carefully chosen stimulus material. Students make good use of the college's computer system outside lessons to access additional material and information. Occasionally, students who are capable of progressing faster than their peers are not provided with opportunities in class to do so.
- Students learn well together. They are encouraged to collaborate in class, both to support and challenge each other. A carefully structured debate in a history lesson was well informed and allowed students to have their views and evidence scrutinised by peers. An online quiz in world development successfully challenged students' perceptions of poverty and the different ways of measuring it.
- Assessment of students' work is particularly thorough. Students are assessed through a wide variety of carefully chosen methods. They receive detailed

feedback which helps them to identify how to improve. Their progress is closely monitored against their target grade. The relatively new online system is easily accessible to teachers, students and parents.

- The college offers an excellent range of provision to meet individual needs. The recent addition of the AS level in world development was popular with students, many of whom use it to extend and reinforce their learning in other subjects. Extensive enrichment activities, such as visits, speakers and other events outside the classroom, raise students' awareness of current issues and broaden their appreciation of the subject.
- The support and guidance available to students are outstanding. Close links with local schools provide excellent opportunities for pupils to sample subjects before making their final choice. Where students need additional help during their course, it is provided promptly and readily received. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities speak highly of the support available to them and the impact it has had on their progress.
- Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment takes place at subject level and good use is made of it by staff to reflect on the strengths of the provision and areas for further improvement. Students' views clearly influence the analysis as does performance against the previous year's targets. The monitoring of action plans is generally good. Equality and diversity are promoted very effectively and students feel very safe in the college.
- Programme area meetings of staff provide opportunities to share good practice but there remains a variety of practice in lesson planning and teaching approaches, with not all lessons reaching the high standards of most. There is not always sufficient cross-fertilisation of ideas across subjects.
- An excellent and high-quality range of resources supports learning. Classrooms provide students with a stimulating learning environment through the informative wall displays and resource banks relevant to the subject.

What does Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students who are capable of making more rapid progress than others can access additional learning material in class to challenge them and enable them to realise their full potential.
- Provide more opportunities for good and outstanding practice in teaching to be disseminated across subjects. In particular, ensure teaching consistently engages the interest of learners in all lessons.

Languages, Literature and Culture

Grade 2

Context

31. Courses are offered in GCE A-level Spanish, French, German, English literature and English language. About 550 students are enrolled on English courses and 210 on modern foreign languages. Currently, 70 students are also enrolled on GCSE English language. Most students are aged 16 to 18. A further 185 students attend part-time evening classes in Spanish, French, German, Italian, Polish and Turkish from beginner to advanced level.

Key findings

- Outcomes for full-time learners are good. Success rates on most AS- and A-level courses in English and modern foreign languages are in line with, or above, national averages. In 2010/11 they dipped below the sixth form college average on AS English literature. The number of students gaining high grades in GCSE English is very high. Students make better progress on some courses than others. In most cases, progress is at least in line with predictions against prior attainment.
- Adult learners achieve very well. Pass rates are particularly high, with 100% pass rates recorded on many courses. Retention rates are more variable. Adult learners make very good progress against their starting points and often progress onto more advanced courses.
- Students enjoy their studies. Attendance is high and punctuality is good. Students feel very safe in the college. The standard of learners' work is very good. Students develop a wide range of skills which thoroughly prepare them for university or employment, and progression rates to university are high.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding, leading to excellent levels of motivation in the classroom. In a very high proportion of lessons, challenging and stimulating questioning produces very articulate and well informed responses from students. Management of paired work is good and students work with high levels of confidence and enthusiasm.
- In modern foreign language lessons, students display very good knowledge of language structures and communicate fluently and effectively. In English, students demonstrate excellent understanding of linguistic techniques. In English and languages there are clear strategies to stretch and challenge the most-able learners.
- Students and staff use information and learning technology very confidently and effectively to enhance learning. Learners of all ages make extensive use of the college's computer-based resources outside lessons to consolidate and extend their understanding.
- Assessment is rigorous. Work is marked thoroughly and provides clear guidelines for improvement. Work is closely annotated and key areas for further development are clearly explained. Realistic and challenging targets are set and

students make very good use of written and oral feedback to improve their written work and oral skills.

- The range of courses on offer is excellent for full-time students. Part-time classes are well attended by the adult community. Enrichment opportunities are outstanding and participation levels are high. English students enjoy regular trips to universities and attend lectures by motivational speakers, as well as visits to theatre performances. Language students benefit from extensive trips abroad and the opportunity for a work placement in a foreign country.
- Support for students is outstanding, particularly for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The need for specialist support is promptly identified and very effectively provided. Students receive very helpful advice and guidance in Year 11 and are able to make informed choices. Enrolment and induction procedures are exemplary and contribute to the students' view that the college is very welcoming.
- Students place a high value on the individual support they receive from subject teachers. In modern foreign languages, a 'pitstop' system has been effectively developed to identify quickly any potential underperformance and ensure students are receiving the support they require. Advice and guidance for entry to higher education are particularly effective.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers use self-assessment to raise expectations and set realistic targets for improvement. Action plans resulting from self-assessment sometimes lack rigour and detail. Despite this, inspectors found a culture of high expectations and a commitment to continuous improvement that have led to outstanding provision in the current year. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these on outcomes.
- Across English and modern foreign languages there is good promotion of equality and diversity. Students develop positive attitudes towards other cultures in both areas. More stretching targets have been put in place this year to address the issue of courses where learners' progress could be improved further.

What does Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor closely the standard of work in AS English literature to ensure that the decrease in success rates is reversed.
- Ensure that action plans provide clear and measurable deadlines for achievement, and that they focus in particular on ensuring that learners make good progress across all their courses.

Information about the inspection

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

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	1,918	1,918	0
Part-time learners	529	23	506
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1		
How safe do learners feel?	1		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1		
Quality of provision	1	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1		
Leadership and management	2		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
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M1 2WD

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