

Lowestoft College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. Lowestoft College is a large college serving the district of Waveney in north east Suffolk. Its campus is in Lowestoft, the second largest town in Suffolk. In 2011, Lowestoft's three secondary school sixth forms will merge into a new sixth form college built adjacent to Lowestoft College. The college provides pre-16 vocational education through two 14-16 partnerships including the North Suffolk Skills Centre in Halesworth. A new principal was appointed in September 2010. In Waveney, the proportion of adults qualified to intermediate level is much lower than in Suffolk and nationally, as is the proportion of school leavers with five or more GCSEs at A* to C grades including English and mathematics. The college's catchment area includes four wards of high social and economic deprivation within Lowestoft. The percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups is very small but slightly higher than in the local area.
2. The college specialises in vocational education and training. The Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency fund the majority of the provision. The largest areas of provision include health, care and public services; engineering; construction; retailing and commercial enterprise; and preparation for life and work. The college offers work-based learning in engineering, construction, hairdressing and business and administration. Vocational courses are provided for increasing numbers of pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools. The college leads a Train to Gain consortium which has five partner organisations. Provision of higher education courses is through work with University Campus Suffolk. A wide range of mostly full-cost specialist courses are available for the offshore and energy industries and through a specialist Maritime Centre which attracts a significant number of international learners.
3. Inspectors graded provision in two areas of learner responsive provision: sport, leisure and recreation, and literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). They graded employer and learner responsive provision in engineering and hospitality and catering.
4. The following organisations provides training on behalf of the college:
 - Construction Training Specialists Ltd
 - TQ Training Management Services Ltd
 - Aquila Training and Education Services Ltd
 - Achor Education Ltd
 - CYA Ltd

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning, including</p> <p>Entry to Employment</p>	<p>537 part-time learners</p> <p>1079 full-time learners 288 part-time learners</p> <p>953 full-time learners</p> <p>39 learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)</p>	<p>288 full-time learners 1555 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>602 learners 394 apprentices</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	Grade
Engineering	2
Hospitality and catering	2
Sport, leisure and recreation	3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	3

Overall effectiveness

5. Learners from a diverse range of backgrounds, including a high proportion with low levels of prior attainment and many who face challenges in terms of social and economic deprivation, enjoy college life and feel safe. Attendance is consistently high. Learners' achievement is satisfactory. Results for qualifications are improving but average. The number of learners who stay to the end of their courses remains just below average. Employment-based learners are successful in gaining qualifications but, particularly on Train to Gain courses, too few complete their qualifications within the time allocated. The preparation of learners for employment is good. Their social and personal development has a high priority although the reinforcement of education about healthy eating is not enough.
6. The college has a well established welcoming, open and friendly approach. Its curriculum meets the needs of the local and regional community well. Learners benefit from good teaching and the high levels of personal support. Staff communicate well and strongly support the college's values and strategic

direction. Managers have improved the quality of provision but improvement is less evident in learners' achievement and staying on rates. Rates in several subjects, however, such as engineering, have increased substantially. The college's systems for using accurate data about learners' success, based on rigorous enrolment procedures, have required a substantial overhaul so that staff can use data effectively to drive improvement. This work is progressing well. Whilst equality is at the heart of the college's admissions policy, promotion of equality in the curriculum is insufficient. Involvement in self-assessment is mostly comprehensive but a minority of judgements are over generous. The new principal and the strengthened management team sharply focus on priorities of ensuring learners' full success. The college's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Main findings

- Learners' long course success rates have increased and they are at the average. Retention rates remain below average. Success rates for younger learners are just above average but below average for adults.
- Employment-based learners have above average success rates but too few learners on Train to Gain courses achieve within the time allocated, in part because of insufficient monitoring of their progress.
- Younger men and women achieve equally well but the gap between higher performing adult men and women's achievement is widening. Pass rates for key skills qualifications are above average. Most learners make satisfactory progress compared to their often low prior attainment.
- Staff prepare learners well for their future economic and social prosperity. Most have high safety awareness. Learners' knowledge of healthy lifestyles is satisfactory; the reinforcement of information about healthy eating is insufficient. Learners make a valuable contribution to college and community life.
- Teaching and learning are good. The large majority of lessons are successful, in which teachers plan well and teach enthusiastically. In less effective lessons, teachers do not focus on the needs of individual learners sufficiently, including development of literacy and numeracy skills. They do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The proportion of learners who require additional learning support is increasing and the quality of provision for them is good. Most learners, identified as requiring support, receive help and achieve success rates which are at least comparable to and often better than their peers.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers mark most work accurately but do not always identify how learners can improve. Not all staff give the same priority to the accuracy of learners' grammar and spelling. Teachers use assessment to help plan learning well on employment-based courses but this is less strong on college-based courses.
- The college offers a comprehensive range of programmes, which meet the needs of learners and employers, and provides clear opportunities for

progression in most areas. Managers have increased the provision of literacy and numeracy programmes in the community effectively.

- The college has good links with employers and schools. It continues to provide effective and flexible courses for local industry and responds well to the needs of new and emerging sectors, such as offshore energy production. The college provides a wide range of popular vocational courses for local schools, and in particular through its outreach skills centre, for those in rural areas.
- Support for learners to help them to succeed is good. Most learners have the opportunity to develop their personal and social skills well through a high level of personal support and a comprehensive range of enrichment activities. However, the systems to identify and support learners at risk of not completing their course are underdeveloped.
- Leaders and managers have a clear strategic vision, which they communicate well to staff. However, some actions in improvement plans are too general and targets set are insufficiently specific or measurable, which prevents robust monitoring and evaluation of the impact of actions.
- The response to the views of learners and employers is good. Learners are actively involved in all the decision-making groups and the college benefits from implementing their suggestions for improvements to the college environment, social activities and the design of courses.
- Arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning are good. Constructive use of the lesson observation process leads to accurate judgements and relevant staff training that benefits learners. The promotion of equality and diversity is insufficient in lessons and in progress reviews.
- Actions to improve data control and management are beginning to be effective. Most staff are using data more effectively to monitor their courses. However, using data to assess the impact of improvements or in self-assessment is insufficiently consistent. Analysis of data to evaluate learners' progress against their starting points and progress between levels of study is insufficient.

What does Lowestoft College need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the high priority given to increasing the retention of learners by reinforcing the use of specific and challenging targets for retention at college and subject levels.
- Introduce measures to evaluate the progress made by learners compared to their starting points by using prior attainment data to set target grades and analysing progression rates between levels of study to measure learners' progress over time.
- Embed the strengthened arrangements for timely assessment and regular monitoring of progress of employment-based learners, including through contractual arrangements with consortium partners.
- Make sure that teachers give sufficient priority to the development of learners' independent learning skills, literacy and numeracy so that teachers' raise their expectations and learners can take more control of their own learning.

- Ensure that all learners have sufficiently precise and challenging academic targets and assessment procedures are fully effective in helping them to achieve these. Strengthen the policy guidance on improving learners' grammar and spelling and ensure that all teachers use a consistently effective approach.
- Ensure quick identification of all learners at risk of not completing their course. Make sure that clear and effective actions for individual learners are in place to support and monitor them closely so that more remain on their courses and are successful.
- Set specific, challenging but realistic targets in action plans for improvement, which are measurable in terms of their impact on learners' outcomes.
- Increase the promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum on college-based courses and reviews in work-based learning.
- Embed improved arrangements to ensure the accurate use of reliable data. Further develop the analysis of data so that it can be used fully effectively and with complete confidence by all staff and governors to monitor and evaluate all aspects of learners' experiences at the college.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the relaxed, friendly atmosphere
- being treated as an adult
- friendly and helpful tutors
- very good assessment in the workplace
- the high quality additional learning support.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more straightforward enrolment
- functional skills
- the quality of a minority of classroom accommodation and the size of a few teaching groups
- long breaks between lessons.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the highly responsive service provided by the college
- high quality assessment in the workplace
- improving skill levels of employees.

What employers would like to see improved:

Employers noted only a very few areas for improvement, which included:

- publicity about the college's courses
- the range of courses available.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. The college's strong focus on working in partnership with employers and meeting local and regional educational needs has consolidated its position and improved its reputation within the community. The quality of provision has improved. However, while some improvements in learners' outcomes have taken place, notably in 2008/09, overall success rates remain around the national average. Actions for improvement are too general and monitoring and evaluation of these has insufficient focus on measuring the impact. Analysis and management of data have required considerable improvement, which is ongoing.
8. Parts of the self-assessment report are broadly accurate but inspectors graded several key aspects lower than the college, and a minority of areas for improvement were not recognised sufficiently. Self-assessment and quality improvement plans take into account the views of users, leading to improvements in the college's environment and curriculum. However, most areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection remain in need of further work. While some progress has been made in most areas, actions have not had sufficient impact on raising the overall effectiveness of the college.
9. The management team has been effectively enlarged to strengthen oversight of the curriculum at a strategic and operational level. It is too early to assess the impact of this and improvements in curriculum areas remain inconsistent.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

10. Learners' success rates on long courses increased from below average to average between 2007/08 and 2009/10. Retention rates overall, whilst increasing, have remained below average over this period. Pass rates increased markedly for adults in 2008/09 to well above average but declined to just above in 2009/10. Pass rates for learners aged 16 to 18 have remained similar and broadly average over the last three years. The college's data for 2009/10, by age group, show success rates at the average for younger learners. The strongest performance for this group was at foundation level. Success rates for adults, based on college data for 2009/10 were below average. The strongest performance for adults was at advanced level.
11. The college has recently revised most of its procedures for the management of data. However, due to a previous lack of rigour in recording of enrolment information and course set up procedures along with too few timely quality assurance checks, inspectors did not have full confidence in the accuracy of the college's data for success rates on some part-time courses and those for key skills, literacy and numeracy qualifications. Managers are putting in place more robust arrangements, including earlier quality control checks. Pass rates for key skills qualifications have increased and are above average, particularly at

foundation level. Pass rates for too many literacy and numeracy courses are below average.

12. The gap between the success rates of younger men and women has closed. Adult men outperform adult women and the gap is widening. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups is too small to allow for a reliable analysis of their performance compared to other groups. Learners who receive additional learning support achieve at least as well as and often better than those who do not receive help.
13. Employment-based learners on apprenticeships achieve above average success rates, although the variation between subject performance is too wide. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships are high. Although the majority of apprentices complete their courses within the allocated time, this measure did not improve between 2008/09 and 2009/10. Learners on Train to Gain courses mostly achieve their qualification aim but too few do so in the allocated time, in part because of insufficiently rigorous tracking of their progress, including monitoring of this in a few consortium partners. Current learners are making improved progress.
14. The majority of learners make satisfactory progress compared to their often low levels of prior attainment. An increasing number are making good progress in lessons. The college's work to improve learners' economic and social well-being and raise their aspirations is notable. The majority move on to positive destinations either through progressing onto further education or training or into employment. Progression into higher education has increased each year, helped by the college's increased higher education curriculum.
15. Learners develop good employability skills. Effective team building activities, including using specialist maritime resources such as the water filled survival tank, are undertaken by a high number of learners and are memorable. The use of realistic work environments is productive across vocational areas but a few learners miss opportunities to gain work experience. Most learners show good safety awareness and value the college's safe and enjoyable environment. Their awareness of healthy lifestyles is improving although the reinforcement of messages about healthy eating through the college's food outlets are insufficient. Attendance is high, demonstrating learners' enjoyment in coming to college.
16. Learners make a strong contribution to college and community life. Their involvement in the workings of the college, through committees and forums, is high and influential. Learners contribute well to the community in a range of ways, for example, by undertaking conservation projects or by raising considerable amounts of money for charities.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

17. Inspectors judged the quality of teaching and learning to be good, which matches the college's judgement in its self-assessment report. The proportion

of good and outstanding lessons has increased since the last inspection, with teachers providing a wide range of learning activities which encourage and sustain learners' interest. The best lessons demonstrate a broad range of strong features, including careful planning, a good match between learning activities and intended learning outcomes, the enthusiasm and expertise of teachers and the creative use of information and learning technology. In these successful lessons, learners make good progress. The minority of less successful lessons lack a clear focus on the learning needs of individual learners, or do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to develop the skills to help them take more control of their own learning. In these lessons, teachers dominate and learners spend too much unproductive time recording information. Learners who find learning difficult receive good additional support, which helps them to learn more effectively.

18. Assessment is satisfactory. Most work is marked accurately but teachers do not always provide learners with sufficient information on how they could improve it, or link what they have achieved to their personal performance targets. A significant minority of teachers do not give sufficient attention to developing the accuracy of learners' grammar and spelling. Assessment is used very well in employment-based provision to plan learners' training and monitor their progress but in college-based provision the use of assessment to help plan learning is less well developed.
19. The college offers a good curriculum with a comprehensive range of courses in most areas. It has successfully maintained an appropriate provision in traditional subjects such as boatbuilding whilst developing new programmes to meet the needs of emerging industries including the energy sector. In line with its Skills for Life strategy, the college has developed and extended provision in literacy and numeracy in the community to support the local area. Revisions to entry requirements on a few courses have ensured that learners are much more likely to be placed on the right course.
20. The college has good, often well established, partnerships with employers who speak very highly of the college's flexible and prompt response to their needs. Its close partnerships with local schools and the North Suffolk Skills Centre enable effective provision for years 10 and 11 pupils, including from more rural areas, who would otherwise find it difficult to take up vocational training. Progression into college courses from this provision is high. Taster days and very short courses are used very effectively to motivate learners and as an introduction to more substantive courses.
21. The college offers a wide range of opportunities for learners' personal and social development through its tutorial programme, although a few curriculum areas make insufficient use of these. Learners who have the opportunity to take part in these activities speak very highly of them. Most areas provide a good range of enrichment activities for learners however, a very few areas do not. The college does not provide sufficient work experience for all full-time learners.

22. Learners value highly the good personal and academic support they receive. They speak positively of the personal, financial and welfare support which are readily available. Support staff work particularly well with various groups of learners with challenging personal circumstances and have developed much expertise in this area. The advice centre and counselling service provide a wide range of services as well as referral to external organisations. A high proportion of learners with identified additional learning needs take up the offer of support and are successful in their studies. However, systems to identify learners at risk of not completing their courses are not always activated quickly enough and do not always identify sufficiently clear and timely support strategies.
23. Learners' progress is monitored effectively through an established system of individual tutorials and target setting. Most individual learning plans contain appropriate academic and personal targets although a minority are insufficiently specific and a few are unrealistic. Tutors review learners' progress frequently and learners speak highly of the useful feedback they receive. However, learning plans do not consistently clearly identify whether or not targets have been achieved and what further action may be required.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. Several managers, including the principal, are new in post, and transition arrangements are well planned to ensure that the college maintains its strong focus on local needs. Leaders and managers have a clear strategy to support the community they serve and provide skills needed by local employers. This they communicate well to staff, who understand the aims and support the college's mission. The operational plans by which staff work towards these objectives are less well developed. Targets are insufficiently detailed to support rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their impact on learners and other stakeholders. Leadership and management of employer responsive provision, a major part of college provision and strategy, are satisfactory and improving. Initiatives to increase success rates within the allocated timescales have begun to improve progress for current learners, but it is too early to judge the impact on final outcomes.
25. Governors work productively with senior managers to develop strategic plans and realign them in the light of new financial restraints. They receive appropriate training in safeguarding, equality and diversity. They induct new governors, including student governors, effectively. Governors monitor closely finance and strategy, and the way the college is meeting the needs of the community. They challenge managers to explain and improve areas of poor performance and under-recruitment. The whole governing body monitors curriculum and standards, and governors have good levels of engagement with the college's events, including celebrations of success. Currently, the monitoring of subject performance is based on a limited overview of data. Between 2007/08 and 2009/10 the data on which to judge progress against retention targets was insufficiently detailed and accurate.

26. The college complies fully with safeguarding requirements, and maintains a comprehensive single central record of vetting checks on staff. A safeguarding team meet regularly and share good practice with each other and with other local education providers. They have strong links with local organisations, including the police and social services. A secure intranet link ensures that all staff can highlight concerns about learners, on which the safeguarding team take prompt action. They make good use of expertise from appropriate organisations to resolve issues and safeguard learners.
27. The college has a recently updated single equality scheme, and robust arrangements for equality and diversity impact assessments on all policies. Careful recruitment means that staffing ratios mirror that of the local population for gender, ethnicity and disability. Arrangements to provide courses in other locations ensure that most learners can access provision within reach of their villages. Displays in the learning resource centre promote understanding of a wide range of equalities issues and celebrate diversity. Managers monitor the success rates of different groups of learners and have taken successful action to reduce the success rate gap between men and women aged 16 to 18. However, a gap is widening between more successful adult men compared to adult women. Managers have not formally analysed the rate at which different groups achieve on employment-based courses. Promotion of equality and reinforcement in a few curriculum areas and in progress reviews is insufficient.
28. The college's response to the views of learners is good. Views are collected in many ways, including blogs and text messages. Learners make a valuable contribution on the governing board and all college committees, and take part in the appointment of senior managers including the principal. Managers have made several adaptations to courses as a result of learners' input, including changes to assessment practice and timetables. A specific forum for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is successful in ensuring that these learners make a contribution to the college. The college works well with employers to create qualifications and courses that meet the particular needs of learners. It collaborates well with a wide range of partners.
29. The self assessment process is inclusive of all staff and a minority of learners and employers. The report is part of an appropriate annual cycle of quality assurance activities, which include termly course reviews based on the evaluation of a range of relevant data. Staff benefit from easy access to data which are accurate for main qualifications. However, data on some additional qualifications, including key and functional skills, is not sufficiently accurate.
30. Management of improvements in teaching and learning has been particularly effective. The lesson observation process is accurate. Observation findings are analysed to inform staff development activities and managers follow up issues to check that improvements have taken place. For example, following training for staff on behaviour management, learners' behaviour in lessons has improved. The quality improvement plan is based on the self assessment report. Managers monitor the plan regularly. However, too many actions are not sufficiently specific and measurable. The evaluation of their impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for learners is insufficient.

31. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Resources, although a minority are in old buildings, are at least adequate. Classrooms and social areas are clean, well maintained and enlivened with wall displays. All staff are either qualified or on programmes leading to qualifications. They all have regular appraisals, informed by their observed lessons, which results in relevant training. The college aims to make its buildings more environmentally sustainable, and reuse and recycle materials wherever possible.

Subject areas

Engineering

Grade 2

Context

32. The college offers courses in welding and fabrication, mechanical and electrical engineering, operations and maintenance engineering, boat building and computer aided design from foundation to advanced level. Over two thirds of the current 286 learners study full-time, three-quarters are aged 16 to 18. Of the 82 part-time learners, adults account for about a third. Some 54 work-based learners are on apprenticeships and a further 109 on advanced apprenticeships. Around 144 pupils aged 14 to 16 study introductory engineering courses. Only a very few learners are female or from minority ethnic groups.

Key findings

- Learners achieve well. Success rates on college-based courses increased substantially between 2008/9 and 2009/10, mainly because more learners stayed on until the end of their courses. Success rates on these courses and on courses for pupils aged 14 to 16, including young apprenticeships, are high.
- Employment-based apprentices have high success rates. The number of apprentices who complete their framework within the planned timescale has increased significantly since 2007/08. Learners' success rates on Train to Gain courses are high; however, the number of learners who complete their course within the planned timescale is satisfactory.
- Learners' skill development is good. College-based learners demonstrate their newly learnt skills in the workshops well. Work-based learners develop relevant occupational skills to enable them to work as full members of company teams. Most obtain useful additional qualifications. In 2009/10, a learner on a welding course won a national welding skills competition.
- Learners behave well in college and employers' workshops. The implementation of safe working practices is thorough. All first year learners complete an appropriate basic health and safety accredited course. Learners say they feel safe in the college and in the workplace.
- Learners progress well between the various levels of study. Last year, three quarters of learners progressed from an introductory course about energy to employment and/or further education. Just under half of current work-based learners have progressed from full-time college-based courses onto their apprenticeships.
- Lessons are well planned and managed, and mostly good. Teachers make productive use of a range of teaching activities to support learning. In most lessons where learners make good progress, good use is made of directed questions requiring extended answers to check learners' knowledge and understanding. However, in a few lessons, checking is insufficient and consequently progress is slower.

- Teacher and learners in most lessons use information and learning technology very well. Teachers provide clear explanations through the excellent use of interactive software and 'smartboards'. The use of electronic portfolios to record and assess vocational work is of a high standard. Resource use in classrooms and workshops is good. Learners use modern equipment in the college and the workplace. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable.
- Assessment practices are thorough. Written assessments provide learners with accurate feedback and most include guidance on how to improve. Detailed individual learning plans have clear targets and timescales. Work-based progress reviews are comprehensive. Learners making slow progress receive further clear improvement targets. Staff keep employers fully informed about individual learner's achievement targets.
- The college offers a highly relevant range of courses appropriate to learners and employers' needs. Learners are able to attend a range of cross-college enrichment activities and some appropriate relevant external activities. However, for college-based learners, access to work experience on employers' premises to broaden their vocational knowledge is insufficient.
- Good partnership arrangements with local industries support the local economy with a particular emphasis on work for the energy sector. For example, the college has developed an energy skills foundation programme. The partnership arrangements with local schools are well established and they provide a wide range of courses for learners aged 14 to 16. College-based higher education courses support further progression in learning.
- Learners receive good support. Staff cooperated very well with local agencies to provide good support for learners when a major local company closed down. Work-based learners receive appropriate additional learning support but they do not always have access to sufficient help when they have to complete work away from the college.
- Leadership and management are good. The subject area has a clear strategy to develop its range of courses to meet the needs of local employers in the oil, gas and wind turbine industries. Achievement and the quality of provision have improved. Partnership arrangements are effective in supporting learners. Management of health and safety is good.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. It contains useful evaluation but too much description and insufficient use of the views of learners and employers. The involvement of learners from under-represented groups in engineering is promoted well. However, the promotion of equality and diversity through curriculum-based activities is insufficient. Completed work-based learners' progress forms make insufficient references to equality and diversity.

What does Lowestoft College need to do to improve further?

- Share the best practice in the use of directed questions to check learners' knowledge and understanding across the teaching team to ensure that all learners are making consistently good progress.

- Provide better access to work experience for full-time learners by making greater use of the subject areas' contacts with employers to improve learners' vocational and employability skills and their confidence in the work place.
- Promote equality and diversity further by developing relevant curriculum and work-based activities to improve and reinforce learners' understanding. Continue to work towards increasing the number of learners from under-represented groups by taking every opportunity to challenge stereotyping and using role models where possible to encourage participation.
- Improve the provision of additional learning support for work-based learners by ensuring they have access to help when they are in the work place to help them progress their work.

Hospitality and catering

Grade 2

Context

33. Some 71 learners follow courses in professional cookery or food and drink service from foundation to advanced level. Almost all are aged 16 to 18 and attend full-time college-based programmes. A further 65 pupils aged 14 to 16 take introductory part-time college-based courses. Another 47 learners are based in the workplace on Train to Gain courses.

Key findings

- Success rates are high for full-time learners. Success rates on employment-based Train to Gain courses are low, mainly because learners have not achieved their qualification within the time allocated. Currently, these learners are making much better progress; staff are working to closely monitored targets to ensure their success within the allocated timescale.
- Learners show good development of practical and personal skills. They are well prepared for employment. In the kitchens, learners demonstrate good knife skills during food preparation. Their presentation of food is of a professional standard. Learners develop their confidence, communication and team work skills well.
- Most lessons are good or better. Learners often work well independently. Learning support assistants work seamlessly with teachers, enabling less able learners to produce high quality dishes. In the few, mainly theory-based, less successful lessons teachers pay insufficient attention to ensuring learners that are more able have challenging learning activities and interaction with learners is limited.
- Partnerships with schools are well developed. Significant numbers of pupils progress into full-time study. Employers are positive about their links with the college; they appreciate the opportunity to contribute to curriculum development as well as the support from college staff to help improve their business performance through staff training.
- A good range of courses is available, including those at the North Suffolk Skills Centre. Progression opportunities beyond intermediate level are limited in food and drink service. Suitable employment-based courses are available for learners in all areas of hospitality provision.
- Learners receive very good support from teachers, learning support assistants and other staff that enables them to achieve and develop both personally and academically. Staff are highly attuned to helping the high number of learners who enter college with low levels of prior attainment successfully.
- Learners have regular progress reviews with clear, time-bound targets set to promote personal and academic development. Learners in the workplace appreciate the much improved support provided by their assessors enabling them to keep on track towards achievement and which improves their potential to gain promotion.

- The promotion of safeguarding and equality and diversity are satisfactory. Staff use lessons relating to menu planning and group tutorials to raise awareness of equality and diversity. However, its reinforcement with learners in the workplace is insufficient. Teachers reinforce safe working practices in the restaurant and kitchen environments at college sufficiently. Appropriate health and safety assessments take place for all learners in the workplace.
- Managers have improved the quality of provision, albeit relatively recently on employment-based courses. Teachers focus strongly on promoting very high standards. Development of a supportive culture that aspires to excellence is progressing well. Staff use data well to monitor performance by both learners and for each course.
- Resources at the main site and the North Suffolk Skills Centre are of a very high industry standard. The restaurant at the main site is particularly inviting and it is highly regarded within the region as a place to dine. Teachers' regular professional updating at high class catering establishments underpins the high expectations and rigorous standards set for learners.

What does Lowestoft College need to do to improve further?

- Embed the close monitoring of learners' progress and regular assessment visits to sustain improvements in success rates within the time allocated on employment-based courses.
- Incorporate a wider range of teaching and learning activities into theory lessons, which stretch and challenge all learners, particularly the more able.
- Improve the range of qualifications available in food and drink service to provide progression opportunities for those learners who wish to specialise in front of house operations.
- Strengthen the promotion of equality and diversity across the curriculum, in particular, by ensuring that awareness raising approaches and reinforcement of equality themes focus strongly on learners and employers in the workplace. Evaluate fully the extent to which learners' awareness is being raised.

Leisure, travel and tourism

Grade 3

Context

34. The college offers travel and tourism, and sport and fitness courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Some 58 learners are studying on travel and tourism courses and 25 on sport courses. Well over three quarters of learners are aged 16 to 18, almost all study full-time and two thirds are female. A few learners are from Black and minority ethnic groups. Additional qualifications in sport and leisure are available to sports learners and those taking public services courses.

Key findings

- Success rates vary by subject and level. In travel and tourism, success rates are very high on advanced level courses but average at intermediate level. In sport, success rates increased in 2009/10 from average to high at intermediate level but they are very low at advanced level and for the fitness instructor qualification, taken as an additional qualification.
- Learners make good progress in travel and tourism. They develop good knowledge of the travel industry and standards of work are high. Teachers develop transferable skills, independent learning and creativity well, preparing them well for work. In sport, learners develop their interpersonal skills well; however, their rate of progress overall is often slow, particularly on the fitness instructor course.
- Promotion of health and safety is insufficient for learners on sports courses. Not all learners complete adequate health screening prior to participation in physical activity. Learners have a few practical sessions with an unqualified member of staff. Suitable changing facilities and showers are not available on-site following participation in sport and exercise, although the building of new showers is currently taking place.
- Learners make positive contributions to the community through a variety of fund raising events that they organise and participate in such as sponsored walks. Learners on sports courses are involved in voluntary work with children during the school holidays and learners from travel and tourism act as tour guides for the college and within local industry.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good on travel and tourism courses. Learners engage very well in independent tasks and respond positively to the many challenging tasks presented to them. They focus exceptionally well and thoroughly enjoy their studies. Good use of assessment supports learning. Detailed and constructive feedback helps learners to improve, particularly in literacy.
- Lessons in sport are much less effective. Teachers do not provide sufficiently challenging activities. Learners make few contributions in lessons. Some unclear explanations limit learners' understanding of complex subjects. Checking of learning is insufficiently rigorous. Learners understand the assessment schedule

and receive adequate feedback. Assessment is not fully rigorous. In a few cases, on the fitness instructor course, unqualified staff make assessment decisions.

- Partnership arrangements are good and benefit learners. In travel and tourism, links with industry allow learners to visit to well-known airlines. In sport, learners visit sport and fitness centres and attend sessions with professional sports coaches. Learners value these experiences highly, which raise their aspirations and increase their industry knowledge.
- The quality of support varies between subjects. Support for learners is good on travel and tourism courses. The monitoring of learners' attendance is thorough. Communication between tutors and additional learning support workers is effective. In sport, support on the intermediate course has improved but learners do not receive enough at advanced level to help them succeed. They receive insufficient guidance about the fitness instructor course.
- The success of management improvement actions varies. In the travel and tourism subject area, staff communicate very well and share a clear vision. Careful setting and monitoring of targets for success rates have brought about improvement. Teachers share best practice and engage in regular self-assessment, which improves the quality of provision.
- Underperforming sports courses have not improved enough. Monitoring of these courses is insufficient. Quality assurance processes have not identified the issues in teaching and learning, and health and safety sufficiently. Sports resources are poor with too few qualified tutors and too few practical facilities available for this year's learners. Not enough sharing of good practice takes place.
- The monitoring of the progress of different groups is adequate and the increased recruitment of learners from under-represented groups has been successful. The promotion of equality and diversity is particularly good on travel and tourism courses where opportunities to raise awareness about equality and challenge stereotyping are maximised.

What does Lowestoft College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates in sport by monitoring learners' progress and the standard of learners work frequently and thoroughly. Ensure managers share and use the effective quality improvement procedures in travel and tourism to help increase the success rate in sport.
- Improve the health and safety of learners in sport by ensuring that qualified staff teach all practical lessons, making sure that appropriate health screening procedures are consistently used, and the college provides appropriate changing and showering facilities.
- Raise the standard of teaching and learning in sport by sharing the best practice in travel and tourism and providing appropriate staff development opportunities. Regularly review the impact of actions to improve teaching and learning.

- Improve entry procedures onto the fitness instructor programme by ensuring that learners' interest and experience in health-related fitness is checked, and the assessment of their communication skills and exercise technique take place prior to enrolment.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Grade 3

Context

35. The college offers part-time courses in literacy, numeracy and in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry to intermediate levels. Some 179 learners are on these courses which take place at the main campus, at 11 community sites in outlying villages and at four employers' premises. Enrolment is throughout the year. About two thirds of learners study on courses lasting up to an academic year and the remaining third are on short courses.

Approximately twice the number of learners take numeracy courses compared to literacy courses. Approximately 50 learners study on ESOL courses. Almost all learners are adults.

Key findings

- Inspectors did not have full confidence in the accuracy of learners' success rate data between 2007/08 and 2009/10 because of inaccuracies and a lack of quality control checks in enrolment and course-set up procedures. Inspectors used pass rates as evidence for evaluating outcomes for learners alongside observations of current learners' progress and standards of work.
- The pass rates for learners on a minority of ESOL and literacy courses, particularly at foundation level, are below average. These courses represent a notable proportion of all courses. Pass rates for other courses, particularly for numeracy and at intermediate level are average.
- Learners have a good awareness of the relevance of their course to their future employment prospects. They understand how they can use the skills they learn in everyday life within their own families and local environment well. They enjoy their study, which supports their personal and social development. Attendance, however, is well below the high college average.
- Teaching and learning are effective. Lessons are well-prepared. Teachers are keen and committed; they use a wide and effective range of assessment approaches, teaching strategies and learning materials to improve learning. Most learners are keenly engaged in their learning and the majority of current learners are making good progress in lessons.
- The link between initial and diagnostic assessment, placement on a course and curriculum content has improved. This ensures the curriculum is well planned and it meets learners' needs and interests. Managers have improved the rigour of processing referrals from Jobcentre Plus to ensure appropriate allocation of learners to relevant courses.
- Partnership work with local organisations, agencies and employers to develop provision for learners is long-standing, effective and increasing. Managers have worked closely with county-based and regional organisations in responding promptly to the demand for courses in rural communities and in response to the requirements of a high proportion of disadvantaged people.

- Monitoring of most learners' progress is effective. However, the quality of target setting in individual learning plans is inconsistent. Quality assurance arrangements have not had enough impact on developing a more consistent approach. Most learners' short-term targets are insufficiently specific making it difficult for teachers and learners to assess progress against them. Learners receive good personal care and support.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Through self-assessment, managers have recognised the need to improve pass rates. Actions to improve the advice and guidance offered to learners to ensure they are on an appropriate level and length of course are effective in the current year. Teaching, and particularly the use of regular assessment, is more effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Specific leaflets and helpline cards on safety support learners with difficulties in reading English. Promotion of equality and diversity is good, as shown by reflecting the cultural diversity within the ESOL provision in some curriculum materials. The college welcomes and provides good support for a full age range of learners, including pensioners, onto literacy and numeracy courses.
- Managers recognise the need to improve the accuracy and management of data. Enrolment and course set up arrangements and the rigour of control checks on data accuracy have increased, although managers have not fully implemented all improvements. In monitoring and evaluating provision, managers are making a clearer distinction between the quality of courses of a long and short duration.

What does Lowestoft College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor attendance closely and take prompt action in the case of a decline in individual learner's attendance.
- Ensure good teaching and learning and improved advice and guidance increase the progress and successful outcomes of all learners through rigorous and frequent monitoring of individual learner's progress compared to their targets.
- Improve the consistency of learning plans by strengthening the quality assurance of target setting for individual learners by teachers whilst retaining the close involvement of learners in setting their own targets.
- Fully implement the actions to improve the accuracy and management of data and undertake regular quality control checks to ensure that enrolment information and course set up details are accurate.

Information about the inspection

36. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's assistant 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
37. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes across the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Lowestoft College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer 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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	1367	1079	288	0
Part-time learners	1843	288	1555	996
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3			
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
How safe do learners feel?	2			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2			
Quality of provision	2			
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
Leadership and management	3			
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
<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?	3			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2			
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?	3			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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