

Bexhill College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130670

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Information about the provider

1. Bexhill College is a large sixth form college in East Sussex. The college draws its students from a wide rural area around the coastal town of Bexhill. It has four partner schools. A further education college is located nearby, in Hastings, and some local secondary schools have sixth forms. The college is co-located with the sixth form provision of a special school, Glyne Gap.
2. Students join the college with a broad range of prior attainment at GCSE. A relatively high proportion has low prior attainment, whilst a relatively low proportion has high prior attainment at GCSE. The south coast is characterised by areas of affluence and pockets of significant deprivation and the college's student population reflects this socio-economic diversity. Just over half receive education maintenance allowance.
3. Approximately 90% of the college's provision is at advanced level, leading to GCE AS and A-level awards in 44 subjects, for international baccalaureate, or to vocational awards in one of 13 subjects. At intermediate level, the college offers vocational awards in 11 subjects and GCSE in 8 subjects including English and mathematics. It offers three foundation level courses including functional skills in English and mathematics. Provision for 14- to 16-year-old students leads to awards and qualifications in a range of vocational areas.
4. This inspection took into account all the provision offered by the college. Provision in health and social care, science and mathematics, visual arts and media and social sciences was inspected in depth and graded.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16 Further education (16 to18)	100 part-time learners 1,458 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	16 full-time learners 383 part-time learners

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	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	Grade
Health and social care, and early years	1
Science and mathematics	3
Crafts, creative arts and design, and media and communication	1
Social sciences	3

Overall effectiveness

5. Bexhill College is a good college. Its leadership and management are good and have been successful in improving provision for students. Overall success rates improved significantly in 2007/08 and have remained at the high, and slowly rising, national rates for sixth form colleges since then. Students make good progress and many of those on vocational courses make excellent progress. They enjoy their time at the college and benefit from additional activities that prepare them well for life beyond their studies there.
6. Leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding students, and in promoting equality and diversity, and the college does these well. It has effective systems for evaluating and improving the quality of its provision and its capacity to make and sustain further improvement is good. Its teaching and learning are good; as are the curriculum and support it offers students. The college is ambitious for its students and has identified correctly where further

work is needed to ensure that all subjects offer students the education and outcomes provided by the best performing areas in the college.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Most students are successful on their courses and gain their intended qualifications. Overall success rates have been sustained at high national success rates for the past three years. On most vocational courses, success rates are particularly high and well above national rates. Success rates for adults have improved to match those of 16- to 18-year-old students.
- Students make good progress during their time at college and at advanced level, many gain higher grades than those predicted by their GCSE results. Most students on vocational courses make excellent progress. However, in a minority of AS and A-level subjects, improvements in success rates and progress are not sustained from year to year.
- Students enjoy their studies and gain a wide range of additional skills and behaviours to prepare them for life beyond the college. The college promotes safe and healthy lifestyles successfully and supports students well in a range of community-based activities.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan and execute lessons well to provide a good variety of appropriately balanced activities to maintain students' interest and to stimulate learning. In poorer lessons, however, teachers do not make sufficient use of a range of activities and resources to meet the differing needs of students or fully exploit questioning to extend learning.
- Teachers and students have good access to high-quality resources. The provision of interactive learning technology, and its use by teachers, has improved considerably since the previous inspection. However, not all teaching rooms are fully equipped yet and teachers are not all accomplished in its effective use in teaching and learning.
- The assessment of students' work is generally good. Assignments and homework are set regularly and teachers often provide helpful feedback so that students can improve their learning. Teachers review students' progress satisfactorily, but do not make sufficiently effective use of their individual learning plans.
- The college offers a good range of provision and is responsive to the needs and interests of students and employers. It plans provision well to provide coherent routes for students to progress to higher levels of study or employment. Students develop new interests and skills in a broad range of enrichment activities. They make pupils from the co-located special school very welcome at their enrichment activities.
- The college's partnerships are very good and used well to improve teaching and learning and the quality of advice and guidance, and to share good practice. College staff play key roles in the Bexhill schools consortium and the Rother and Hastings 14 to 18 partnership.

- Care, guidance and support are good. Staff provide good, timely support for those students who need it. Additional support is very effective in helping students remain on programme, and improve their grades. Systems for identifying and supporting vulnerable students are good. However, tutors do not link some tutorial activities to students' academic programmes and these activities do not always seem relevant to them.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior managers have taken well-considered actions to improve provision and they support curriculum managers well. They have raised staff and student aspirations and successfully placed students' experience and outcomes at the heart of the college's work. Staff are well motivated to achieve the college's vision, 'outstanding college, outstanding opportunities'.
- The college sets a high priority on the safety and well-being of students and handles incidents swiftly and thoroughly. It promotes equality and diversity well and has successfully closed gaps between the achievements of different groups of students. Staff are encouraged to promote equality and diversity in their lessons. However, practice varies across the curriculum.
- Self-assessment is self-critical and thorough in most areas of the college. It makes good use of data and curriculum reviews to underpin judgements. Lesson observations and well-targeted staff development have improved the quality of teaching and learning. However, in a minority of subjects, managers are not sufficiently evaluative and do not set sufficiently specific targets to secure improvements.

What does Bexhill College need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop teachers' skills to make better use of a range of teaching methods, in order to increase the proportion of good or better lessons and improve students' progress and outcomes.
- Ensure that self-assessment across all subjects is consistently evaluative and leads to specific and detailed targets, to bring about continuous and sustained improvement.
- Continue to develop the skills of curriculum managers in order to achieve the ambitious college vision and meet high aspirations for students.
- Fully implement the college's strategy for interactive technologies and their use to improve teaching and learning further.
- Share best practice in the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum to ensure all students are well prepared for life in a diverse community.
- Link tutorial activities more closely to the content of students' programmes to make them more relevant and meaningful for students.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the approachability of staff
- teachers' enthusiasm and passion for their subjects
- the modern and attractive college buildings and the excellent resources and facilities provided for students
- the safe and friendly environment in the college
- group work, discussion and debate during lessons
- the use of interactive technology in lessons
- the wide range of subjects and courses the college offers
- the positive way in which the college responds to feedback from students.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more attention to target setting and the following up of targets by some tutors
- better information and feedback on assignments
- better information on the tasks and activities they are asked to do in lessons.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the welcome they receive when they visit the campus
- the college's responsiveness to their suggestions about the courses it should offer
- the way students are prepared for work experience, enabling them to make good contributions to the workplace
- the ease with which staff work with them on joint activities.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no suggestions identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. Leaders and managers at the college have taken successful action to improve the retention and achievement of students by improving the quality of teaching, learning and support that they receive. They have effective systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and give staff development and support for improvement high priority. Managers and teachers have sustained overall success rates at the high, and rising, national rates for three years and outcomes are now good. The quality of provision and leadership and management are now also good. However, managers have not yet been successful in ironing out variations in performance from year to year in some subjects.
8. Senior managers are ambitious for the college and its students and have been successful in changing its culture and gaining staff support for these changes. Governors fulfil their monitoring role well, making good use of their expertise to challenge the college. Financial management is strong and value for money is good. Senior managers acknowledge that there is still work to do to improve all aspects of provision but have accurately identified where change is needed and have suitable systems in place for securing this change.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Most students achieve good results at college. In 2007/08, the college made a significant improvement to the proportion of students who were retained on their courses and successful in achieving their qualifications. Success rates reached the high national rates for sixth form colleges. For many students on vocational courses, they were well above national rates. The college has subsequently sustained these overall improvements. There are no significant differences in the performance of different groups. Most recently the college has improved the retention of adult students and their success rates now match those of students aged 16 to 18. However, the college's overall successes disguise some variation in success rates from year to year across a small number of subjects.
10. Students make good progress during their studies. The college recruits students with a wide range of prior attainment. Those with modest results at GCSE, and those on vocational courses, make particularly good progress but the college is less successful with those students that it deems gifted and talented. Although these students do well, the college recognises that the proportion gaining A and B grades at AS and A-level is insufficiently high.
11. Students enjoy their studies and life at the college. Their economic and social well-being improves as a result of their academic studies, their tutorials and the enrichment programme. Students are given good guidance on their health and well-being, and on staying safe. The college's co-location with a special school

enables many students to participate in joint activities with its pupils and they regularly take part in charitable fundraising and local community events. Students are well prepared for life beyond college.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Students enjoy their lessons and contribute well and enthusiastically. Teachers plan most lessons well, and provide a good variety of appropriately balanced activities to maintain students' interest and stimulate learning. Students work safely, including in practical lessons.
13. In better lessons, teachers use individualised and challenging activities to motivate students and help them make good progress. In the small proportion of weaker lessons, teachers do not ensure that activities and course materials meet the differing needs of students. Teachers often use questioning skilfully to promote learning and understanding, but a minority make insufficient use of extended questioning.
14. The college provides high quality resources for teachers and students. Provision of interactive learning technology has improved and 60% of teaching rooms are now equipped. The college plans full coverage, with training for staff, within the next three years. The college's recently upgraded virtual learning environment is used increasingly by teachers and students, but staff do not yet make sufficient use of it in assessments or to plan learning, set targets or review students' progress.
15. Assessment in most subjects is good. Teachers set assignments and homework regularly. They often provide helpful comments on completed student work, enabling students to improve their learning. Feedback in lessons is also good. Teachers review students' progress satisfactorily, but they make insufficiently effective use of individual learning plans.
16. The college has a detailed scheme for judging the quality of lessons which forms part of its annual quality review cycle. The scheme is thorough, implemented effectively, and accurate. Lesson observation records generally support the grades awarded, but do not always distinguish clearly between lessons graded outstanding and good. Observation records clearly show the college's emphasis on promoting equality and diversity in lessons, but identify that this is not yet fully achieved. Lesson observations lead to detailed improvement plans and good professional development is integral to the college's scheme.
17. The college's response to the needs and interests of students, employers and local school pupils is good and the college offers them a wide range of provision. It collaborates well with employers to develop its vocational courses. Managers plan provision to provide coherent routes for learners to progress to either employment or higher education. Enrichment activities help students

develop new skills and interests. Students from a co-located special school regularly join these activities successfully.

18. Partnerships with local schools are very good, and include the Rother and Hastings 14 to 18 partnership and the Bexhill Schools Consortium. These partnerships have been used well to help improve teaching and learning, the quality of advice and guidance and encourage the sharing of good practice.
19. Care, guidance and support are good. The college provides particularly helpful, appropriate and timely individual support for those students with an identified need. This is very effective in helping students to participate, remain on programme, or achieve improved grades. Staff are particularly careful to monitor the progress and provide support for vulnerable students or those identified as at risk of leaving or underperforming. The tutorial programme for students is well planned, but tutors do not link its content to students' academic programmes and students do not always find it relevant.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers have taken well-considered actions over the past four years and have improved students' success rates and teaching and learning. They have raised aspirations and changed the college culture to place students' experiences and outcomes at the heart of its work. Staff are well motivated to achieve the vision, 'outstanding college, outstanding opportunities'. However, in a minority of subjects, curriculum management and self-assessment are not yet good and pose barriers to improvement.
21. Governance is good. Governors make good use of their expertise and local knowledge to contribute to strategic planning. Their scrutiny of the college's work is supported by open, evaluative reports, for example on progress in meeting targets. Their understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement is good. Well-planned link visits help involve governors closely in the work of the college.
22. The college's management of safeguarding is good. It sets a high priority on the safety and well-being of students and fulfils statutory requirements. Staff and governors take part in relevant training and are kept up to date. The college handles incidents swiftly and works closely with relevant agencies. It supports students well if they are vulnerable and provides good guidance on safe practice. The college's records of accidents and incidents, which are few, are thorough; bullying is rare.
23. The college promotes equality and diversity well. It analyses students' performance data carefully and has successfully closed gaps in achievement, for example between male and female students. It monitors progress in meeting objectives in its equality and diversity plan, although these targets are not all sufficiently specific. It provides support and training in promoting equality and diversity in the classroom, but practice in subjects is not uniformly good.

Diversity is celebrated well through special events and thought-provoking displays around the college.

24. Students have good opportunities to make their views known through surveys, focus groups, the students' forum and student council. The college helps students make effective contributions as members of the governing body. Staff consider students' feedback carefully. The refectory and study centre were remodelled in response to students' feedback. Feedback from parents has led to improved study skills support and more prompt reporting when students arrive late to lessons.
25. Self-assessment is thorough, evaluative and accurate. The college now makes good use of data to underpin judgements. Self-assessment reports are carefully moderated. The senior leadership team sets suitable targets for improvement and monitors progress regularly. Senior managers take prompt action when needed, for example if success rates fall below the national rate, and this has been successful in raising students' attainment in several subjects. However, evaluation at subject level is not always sufficiently thorough or targets sufficiently specific or precise to ensure continuous or sustained improvement.
26. Value for money is good. Outcomes for learners and the quality of provision are now good. Attendance during the inspection was 92%; retention rates are well above national figures. Most students make good progress in their studies. Financial management is strong. The college's accommodation and facilities are good and used well to support learning.

Subject areas

Health and social care and early years

Grade 1

Context

27. The college provides a range of health, social care and child care courses leading to vocational qualifications at intermediate and advanced level. Of the 152 students studying these courses at the time of the inspection, 58% are working towards advanced level qualifications and 15% are working towards intermediate qualifications. Twenty one of these students are men. The college has links with local schools and 20% of provision in this subject area is made up of 14- to 16-year-old students are also working towards an intermediate diploma in health and social care. A small number of adult students are on counselling courses.

Key findings

- Pass rates are very high, and have been well above national rates for the last three years. Retention rates on some courses declined in 2008/09, to just above national rates, but this was rectified in 2009/10 and almost all the students who started a course in this subject area gained their target qualification. Success rates for 16- to 18-year-old students are similarly high.
- Students produce a high standard of work in lessons and in their assignments. They make very good links between the theory they learn at college, their personal experience and their experience of work placements. Teachers make effective links between assignments, students' work and their career aspirations. This motivates students and helps them make good progress.
- Students make excellent progress during their studies. Most gain higher grades than predicted by their prior attainment. Their progression to further study, higher education or to employment is very good. Many go on to study intermediate courses following their foundation year and, in 2009/10, all the students on intermediate programmes progressed successfully to advanced level.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers plan lessons skilfully to meet the needs of all their students. These lessons are lively, interesting and successful in encouraging students' participation. Classrooms are well equipped and in good lessons teachers and students make effective use of resources. However, a small number of lessons lack sufficient variety and challenge to maintain students' interest.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is good and, in the main, their feedback on students' work is clear, informative and helps students to improve their performance. However, some assignment briefs are not sufficiently clear and students find them difficult to understand at first.
- Teachers organise very interesting and inspirational trips and projects to enrich the curriculum for students. These include the use of former students as guest

speakers and successful practitioners. These activities are highly effective in developing students' skills and in building their confidence. However, teachers do not make use of this enrichment at a sufficiently early stage in students' courses.

- Teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff work well together to provide very good learning and pastoral support for students. Individual and small group sessions are clearly focused and highly effective in keeping learners on programme and helping them to achieve. Learners have a very good awareness of the range of support available and how to make use of it.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers plan provision well and are responsive to local needs. They focus clearly on quality improvement and communicate well with staff to keep them well informed. Managers provide good support for staff when implementing improvement plans and to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity particularly well in lessons. Students learn to value difference and have a good understanding of equality and diversity. They provide particularly helpful communications support for pupils from the special school co-located with the college.
- Safeguarding has a high priority in the department and learners feel safe in college and on placement. Managers have improved their guidance on safeguarding for students. Students use their work placements and the associated risk assessment very well to improve their own knowledge and understanding of safeguarding topics.
- The departmental self-assessment report is evaluative and accurate. It makes good use of findings from course reviews and feedback from learners to evaluate provision and propose action for improvement. The resulting plans are clear and managers and staff implement them carefully.

What does Bexhill College need to do to improve further?

- Introduce the wider enrichment activities earlier in students' first year of study to improve students' motivation and interest in their studies.
- Improve the use of learning technology and the range of activities used in lessons in order to help those learners who are struggling and to challenge the more able.
- Revise assignment briefs so that students understand what is required of them more quickly.

Science and mathematics

Grade 3

Context

28. The college offers AS and A-level qualifications in physics, chemistry, biology, geology, mathematics, further mathematics and psychology. It also offers a vocational course in applied science at advanced level. At intermediate level, it offers GCSE qualifications in mathematics, functional mathematics and science. Of the 547 students on science courses, 521 are aged between 16 and 18, and all study full time. Psychology courses at AS and A-level account for almost a quarter of the enrolments in science.

Key findings

- Students make good progress in A-level biology and further mathematics and in these subjects, and in A-level chemistry, success rates are in line with high national rates. In 2009/10, the success rate in AS mathematics was well above the national rate and in geology had risen to the national rate.
- Pass rates in GCSE sciences are high and significantly above national rates. The college has made good improvements to the pass rate in GCSE mathematics, which in 2009/10 was 20 percentage points above the low national rate.
- Success rates have declined below national rates in laboratory sciences at AS-level. In chemistry and physics, students make insufficient progress. Too few students with good GCSEs gain high grades at advanced level. In physics A level, improvements in students' progress and success rates in 2008/09 have not been sustained. Mathematics A-level success rates fell below national rates in 2009/10.
- Provision in psychology is outstanding. Success rates for these students are very high. At AS level they are well above national rates and at A level they are above high national rates. Teaching and learning on psychology courses are outstanding and students make excellent progress during their studies. Many of those who complete the AS qualification go on to study at A level.
- The college provides good teaching and learning facilities for students. Its laboratories and classrooms are generally spacious and well equipped. It provides students with good access to computers and relevant and helpful subject software to help them study in their own time.
- Teaching and learning in laboratory sciences and mathematics are satisfactory. In better lessons, teachers use a range of activities to challenge and motivate students. They make good use of interactive technology to help students understand difficult concepts.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work in laboratory sciences and mathematics is satisfactory, but teachers do not always give students sufficiently specific feedback to help them improve. They do not always follow up the actions that they have recommended to students.

- In weaker laboratory science and mathematics lessons, teachers do not make sufficient use of a range of teaching methods to help those students who are struggling or to challenge the more able. Although teachers know their students' needs well, they do not always adapt their teaching to meet these differing needs.
- The college provides a good range of courses that includes vocational sciences, allows for progression from intermediate to advanced level and enables students to gain science and mathematics qualifications at intermediate level. Staff make good use of national and regional bursaries and schemes to develop students' wider scientific skills in real work settings.
- Staff provide particularly good, individual subject support and workshops for students outside lesson time, to help them make progress. Students value this additional support. However, some staff and students have become over reliant on this support as a way of meeting students' individual needs, and have paid insufficient attention to ensuring that lessons also meet all students' needs.
- Managers at the college have accurately identified areas for improvement in laboratory sciences and mathematics and taken action to improve these subjects. However, they have not yet secured sustained improvements across provision or halted a decline in some success rates. Inconsistencies in performance from year to year remain. The college has recently changed its management arrangements for this subject area.

What does Bexhill College need to do to improve further?

- Make better use of a range of methods for meeting the individual needs of students within lessons to improve their progress and attainment.
- Continue to identify and share good practice in science teaching to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Provide more specific feedback on assignments to help students understand concepts and improve their performance.
- Set specific targets for individual students to help them improve, and follow up the associated actions to help students progress.

Crafts, creative arts and design, and media and communication

Grade 1

Context

29. This subject area has 663 students enrolled on courses in art, media, textiles, film studies and photography. Most students are aged between 16 and 18. The college offers a first diploma in media, a national diploma in art and design, and AS and A levels in a range of different art specialisms as well as media. Photography and media studies are popular with large numbers enrolled on these courses. The majority of courses are at advanced level.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. Success rates are very high on most courses. In 2009/10 they were well above high national rates in AS and A-level art, AS textiles, AS photography and AS film studies. Pass rates on many full-time courses are 100% and retention rates are also very high. During the inspection week, attendance was very good at 98%.
- In many of their courses, students make good progress. In A-level textiles and AS and A-level media studies, a particularly high proportion of students gain high grades in their examinations. However, in photography and A2 film studies, the proportion of students gaining these high grades is low. The standard of students' work is high in all specialist subjects in the area.
- Teaching and learning are good. The better lessons are energetic and involve all students in learning. Teachers have clear learning outcomes for these lessons and plan them well. They make good use of information technology and provide suitable activities and resources on the college's virtual learning environment for later reference. Students participate well, and teachers check their learning effectively.
- Teachers make good use of community projects to develop students' skills. For example, media students produced the official DVD of the Hastings half marathon. Others worked with local primary schools to help tackle bullying. Exhibitions of students' work are regularly displayed in prestigious local buildings that are open to the public.
- A small minority of lessons, however, are dominated by the teacher and do not involve students sufficiently. In these instances, teachers do not plan a range of activities that meet the precise needs of individual students and enable them to make better progress, and do not always use questioning well to consolidate learning.
- Specialist accommodation for media is outstanding. The television studio and editing suite are of high industry standard. Specialist software is available on all computers throughout the college to support students' media work. Technicians ensure safe working practices in studios and workshops. Staff mount inspiring displays of work to provide a stimulating learning environment for students.

- The college provides a good range of courses from foundation to advanced level. Students progress very well to higher levels of study within the college. Teachers have current industry experience and offer students helpful careers advice. All courses have a clear vocational focus. Progression to higher education or employment is very good, and most students progress to university or to relevant employment locally.
- Staff provide well-planned and highly beneficial activities and opportunities, including educational trips and visits, to extend and enrich students' courses. They ensure that students make good use of all the opportunities for development available to them during these activities. Students also benefit from visiting speakers who are practising artists.
- Support for students is outstanding. Teachers know their students very well and are sensitive to their individual needs. They offer excellent pastoral and academic support outside lessons. They review students' progress frequently and give detailed feedback on their work to support and raise students' aspirations. Students speak highly of the support and help they receive.
- Leadership and management of this area are outstanding. Strategies to improve retention and achievement have been very effective in improving students' attainment. Managers have an open door policy which enables good communication between students, staff and managers. Lines of responsibility are clear. Staff are well supported and are keen to implement strategies for improvement.
- The college's observation system for teaching and learning is very effective and provides managers with an accurate assessment of their quality. Staff make very beneficial use of peer observations to share good practice. The subject area's self-assessment report is inclusive, and accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement.
- Teachers' promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is outstanding. Teachers include cultural themes in all courses and use them well to develop students' understanding. They challenge stereotyping effectively and have improved the gender balance in classes. Students collaborate particularly successfully with external organisations and the co-located special school to reinforce their understanding of inclusion and diversity.

What does Bexhill College need to do to improve further?

- Make use of the full range of methods for meeting the individual needs of learners in all lessons to enable students to make better progress.
- Make better use of a range of questioning techniques to check students' understanding and consolidate their learning in lessons.

Social sciences

Grade 3

Context

30. The college offers full-time courses at advanced level in sociology, government and politics, geography and economics. The majority of the 311 enrolments are by learners aged 16 to 18 and only 3 enrolments are by adults.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory, although there is some variation within and between subjects and from year to year. Success rates in 2009/10 are in line with high national rates in sociology and A-level politics, but just below national rates in other social sciences. Retention rates are high in A-level sociology and AS geography and sociology but have fallen behind national rates in A-level geography, politics and economics.
- Students make satisfactory progress in most of their subjects. However, the proportion of students gaining higher grades is below national rates and this proportion is declining. College data on higher grade achievement in 2009/10 indicate that this remains an area for improvement.
- In most lessons teaching is good and supports learning well. Teachers adopt a range of engaging and participative methods in their lessons. In the best lessons, they use good questioning techniques to deepen students' understanding. Teachers use interactive technology effectively to add pace and interest and students make good use of laptop computers to help their learning.
- In lesson plans, teachers generally pay good attention to students' differing needs. Most lessons offer extension materials and tasks for the more able and some assistance, such as guidance on essay writing, for those who need them.
- Teachers give students good opportunities to develop their discussion and debating skills. They handle sensitive and controversial issues well in lessons. Students respect the differing opinions of their peers and support each others' learning.
- In the weaker lessons, teachers do not use questioning effectively to assess students' understanding or to challenge students, particularly the most able.
- The marking of students' work is inconsistent and insufficiently helpful within and between subjects. The criteria against which they are being assessed are not always clear. Students receive comments on their performance but are not always clear about what to do to improve, or about what is required by examination boards to help them meet their target grades.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the key strengths and most areas for development in this subject area. Their plans for improvement are sound, with clear actions, success criteria and timescales. However, plans pay insufficient attention to improving the marking of assignments and providing feedback to students as part of the programme to improve their performance.

What does Bexhill College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the marking of students' work and the associated feedback are consistent and against clear criteria, to help students understand what is needed in examinations, and what improvements they must make in order to reach, or exceed, their target grades.
- Make better use of questioning in lessons to probe students' understanding and deepen their learning, particularly for the most able.

Information about the inspection

31. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy 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.
32. 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 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)
Bexhill 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	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	1,503		1,450	53
Part-time learners	69	69		
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2			
Outcomes for learners	2	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?	2			
How safe do learners feel?	2			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2			
Quality of provision	2	2	2	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	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
<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?	2			
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?	2			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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