

Suffolk One

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135863
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	381938
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Seath HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	16–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1143
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	1143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Ian Morgan
Headteacher	Alan Whittaker
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Scrivener Drive Ipswich IP8 3SU
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Age group	16–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Seath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philippa Francis	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derrick Baughan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Keith Brown	Additional inspector
Peter McKenzie	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. A total of 43 classes and 38 teachers were observed. In addition, a significant number of shorter visits were made to classes to evaluate specific aspects of the college's provision, for example the current progress of students and effectiveness of specialist support. Inspectors met with many staff, leaders and managers, a representative of the local authority, and the chair of the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with many students and talked with them at length about their experiences at the college. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection and observed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors paid particular attention to the college's evaluations of its own performance and looked closely at the standard of students' work and teachers' assessments of it. A total of 89 parental questionnaires were received, a relatively low number. A large number of questionnaire responses were received from students and staff.

Information about the College

Suffolk One is a large institution that caters for post-16 students. Though technically a school, it is referred to by all by the preferred designation of 'college'. It was formed as a new institution in September 2010, replacing and combining the sixth form provision of many secondary schools in the area. In addition, at its formation it subsumed a number of special schools. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is relatively low and a small number has a statement of special educational needs. Around 60% of students are enrolled on GCE 'A' and 'AS' subjects, with the remaining 40% on vocational provision including a substantial range of National Diploma and level 2 provision. The proportion of students of ethnic minority heritage is low. The government has not set floor standards for the attainment and progress of post-16 institutions. This inspection was the first for the college.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Suffolk One is a good institution providing a good quality of education for the large number of post-16 students that it serves. The college is not outstanding because the quality of teaching is not yet outstanding, with some variability in outcomes between subjects.
- Achievement is good. Overall, students currently make better than expected progress in a majority of subjects and areas of provision. Disabled students and those with learning difficulties or other special educational needs make progress that is at least as good as their peers. Standards of attainment and progress have improved in the short time that the college has been in operation. Achievement in vocational provision is good with some that is excellent, for example in aspects of engineering. Retention on courses is good because advice, guidance and on-course support is good.
- Inspectors observed a high proportion of good and better teaching that enables good progress to be made. In many classes students quickly develop skills of independent learning and readily take advantage of the many opportunities and resources that the college presents to work individually or in small groups. In a minority of classes however these skills do not develop quickly because teachers talk too much with too little contribution from students. Sometimes lessons are not planned well enough to cater effectively for those who are finding aspects of the work difficult.
- Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are all good. Students are polite, helpful, and take a pride in their surroundings and college. This was made very clear to those inspectors who attended the college's evening concert. This well-attended event showed students at their best, performing a wide variety of music with many accomplished and talented individuals. The school's good curriculum is wide and balanced with extensive extra-curricular activities that are appreciated by students.

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- Since the recent formation of the college, leaders and managers have moved quickly to establish reliable and effective systems to monitor and improve provision. Teaching and learning are improving as a result. Strategic and operational planning is strong. Self-assessment is used well to identify strengths and weakness and manage performance, although the best practice could usefully be shared wider than the subject areas in which it is currently widespread. Good monitoring of student progress is well-embedded and based on accurate assessment. Target setting is challenging and clear, and progress toward targets is monitored well at all levels. The college benefits from the many strengths evident in the governing body.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- By January 2013, raise the quality of all teaching and learning to that seen in the best subjects by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan and deliver teaching that is carefully matched to the differing learning needs of students, so that those who find a subject difficult make accelerated progress and catch up with their peers
 - giving students in all classes substantial opportunities to develop and practice the skills of independent learning and discussion
 - devising and implementing systems to share the very best practice between faculties and disciplines, thereby ensuring that the expertise of those staff with post-compulsory and compulsory education backgrounds is disseminated widely.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In the first year of its operation the college enrolled a single year group which took GCE 'AS' examinations in 2011. These results were in line with national expectations for most subjects but with some marked variations. These students have now progressed to year 13 and a new year 12 has joined. The current year 13 is making good progress, based on classroom observations and the school's own assessment and monitoring data. This progress is matched in the current year 12, demonstrating a marked improvement in both attainment and progress over the previous year. This is because college systems for monitoring progress, for support, and for advice and guidance have stabilised and are now good. The retention of students across the college is high. For the majority of subjects, students are on track to attain standards that are at least in line with national averages. Given the lower-than-average prior attainment on entry this represents good progress. Variations in predicted outcomes between subjects remain, though with signs of improvement in important areas such as science.

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Many students enter the college with skills of independent learning that are underdeveloped. Most gain these skills quickly when given the opportunity to do so in class. Inspectors observed many students working independently and in small groups effectively. Overall, students' skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology develop well. Written work is generally produced to high standards.

The considerable number of students on vocational provision are on track to attain standards that are at least in line with national expectations. In some areas, for example engineering, these will be exceeded. Students make good progress in these areas because they are taught well and have excellent resources to help them learn. Disabled students and those with special educational needs who are on Foundation Learning Programmes at the college make progress that is at least as good as their peers. Examination results in 2011 showed that male students attained lower standards than females overall, and that this gap was larger than that expected nationally. However more recent data indicate that this gap is closing quickly.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers and students felt that the college enables students to make good progress, and inspectors agreed.

Quality of teaching

As a new institution, the college has recruited a good mix of staff from both further education and schools. This means that the college has a wide range of teaching expertise to draw upon. The large majority of teaching observed was good or better. Inspectors' view that teaching is good was confirmed by student and parental and carer questionnaire responses.

In class, students make good progress because they are taught well by teachers with good subject knowledge, often passionate about their subjects. In the best examples, students' interest is maintained because activities are rich and varied and discussions lively and stimulating, allowing the development of the skills of analysis and presentation. In these classes students quickly take responsibility for their own learning and so develop skills of independent learning. In the very best classes teachers have a clear understanding of the attainment and progress of individuals. As a result, the teaching of those who are finding a topic difficult is different, and is planned to enable these students to catch up with others. Consequently, those with the weakest attainment make the best progress. This is a notable feature of teaching seen in Foundation Learning where many students have profound learning difficulties.

In the minority of weaker classes teachers talk too much. As a consequence, students are not given the opportunity to engage with each other, to challenge or discuss, or develop independent learning. In some of these classes the level of the skills being developed is well below students' capabilities and therefore progress is weaker. In contrast to the best classes, those students who are finding a topic

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difficult are either not identified or expectations for them are lowered. They therefore make less progress and do not catch up with their peers.

Support for students is both strong and extensive. Assessment and monitoring are accurate and well-used by an effective system of Personal Progress Tutors. These staff ensure that those at risk of underachieving are identified and that any necessary support is put in place quickly. This can include assertive mentoring by senior staff. Students benefit from timely and helpful marking and homework. Teaching has a good impact on students' social development. They quickly become mature young adults who take responsibility for themselves and for others. This was demonstrated by the participation of many students in a very successful evening concert attended by inspectors. Individual solo performers were supported very well by their peers and all worked collaboratively to perform a wide range of music drawn from many cultures.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of students around the college is exemplary. They are polite, helpful and mature. Students and parents and carers report that bullying is almost unheard of, and there have been no reported racist or other incidents. The college does have good policies to address any issues should they arise, and staff make very clear to students what the expectations are during their time at college. Almost all of the parents and carers and students who responded to questionnaires indicated that students felt safe at the college. The college makes thorough arrangements to ensure the safety of vulnerable young adults.

In class, students are purposeful and attentive. Inspectors saw no examples of poor behaviour. In a minority of classes, behaviour for learning is not as well-developed as it could be. In these lessons, students are reluctant to take part in discussions or work collaboratively. Attendance is good, and for some provision it is excellent. Punctuality to classes is good.

Leadership and management

Faced with a new institution, new body of staff, and new intake of students, leaders and managers have had to move quickly to establish systems to monitor and drive improvement. In this they have been successful and can point to improving performance and progress in many areas. The variability in performance seen between subjects in the first year of results is being tackled and teaching is improving from its already strong position. The quality of provision overall is good, and better than this in some areas. The college has an accurate view of its own performance and mechanisms to identify good practice are developing quickly, although not yet fully embedded throughout the college. The college has strong and reliable systems to monitor students' progress and to inform managers quickly of possible underachievement. The college is demonstrating good capacity to sustain the improvements already made in the short time since formation. The need to tackle those subjects that are not performing as well as others is well-understood

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and recognised, and changes for improvement are in hand.

The governing body has been well-chosen and has many skills and experiences of value to the college and its students. Governors have ensured the rapid development of the college from a standing start. Systems work smoothly and performance is monitored effectively. Statutory requirements for safeguarding, tackling discrimination and the monitoring of equalities are met well. As a consequence, the promotion of equality is good and its principles are practised by students. Governors are well-informed by managers who are willing and able to demonstrate and discuss both strengths and weaknesses. Governors challenge weaker performance well, and this challenge translates effectively into faculty action plans and improvement.

Managers and staff at all levels feel well-supported. Senior leaders give the college a strong direction for improvement and further development. Collaborative working with other providers, agencies and employers is excellent. For example, the college is working increasingly closely with feeder secondary and primary schools to make pupils aware of the opportunities that are available.

Since its formation the college has, rightly, placed the emphasis for development on teaching and learning. As a consequence this is now strong. Professional development takes place every morning before students arrive, and often covers aspects of teaching and the dissemination of good practice. This is well-developed within faculties and subject areas but is not extended far enough across disciplines to build on existing strengths. The college's lesson observation system is accurate with an appropriate emphasis on learning rather than teacher activities. It is a good tool for improvement and informs professional development needs well.

Students benefit from a wide and varied curriculum with a good mix of vocational and academic courses. Progression opportunities are available where appropriate. Extra-curricular provision is strong with many students participating in various clubs, events and team sports. The college promotes students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

4 May 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Suffolk One, Ipswich IP8 3SU

As you may know, I visited your college earlier this week with four other inspectors. We talked with many of you, sat in on many of your classes, and looked at many examples of the work you do. Two of us attended your excellent concert on the Wednesday evening and enjoyed watching many talented individuals perform. We particularly enjoyed the guitar and drum solos – well done.

Your college is a good one. It has come a long way in the short time it has been open, and much of that progress is down to you. You develop skills of independent learning quickly and readily take advantage of the many resources and private or group study areas that the college has. In class you work well and make good progress because you are taught well.

You brought a few things to our attention, and so did your parents and carers. Broadly, you are all happy with the standard of education you are receiving and feel that it is preparing you well for the next stage in life – we agree. From what you and your parents and carers told us, together with what we found and saw, we are asking the college to make some changes which they agree will improve your education further.

We have asked that teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that those of you who struggle with a particular topic or subject get slightly different teaching to accelerate your progress in class. This will take time because it involves teachers sharing the very good practice and teaching methods that we have seen, however you can help by making clear when you feel you have not understood something.

One of the things we noticed was that most teachers encourage productive class discussions and independent learning, and in many cases this is done very well and you benefit. However there are some classes where this is less well-developed. We have asked that the college looks closely at this and that teachers plan for this type of activity more consistently.

Thank you for your courteous welcome. I wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

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