

Sussex Downs College

General further education college

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|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Inspection dates | | 12–16 November 2012 |
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Requires improvement-3 |
| | Previous inspection: | Good-2 |
| Outcomes for learners | | Requires improvement-3 |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | | Requires improvement-3 |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | | Requires improvement-3 |

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Too many learners do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly on academic courses. Teachers' expectations of learners are not always sufficiently aspirational.
- Too many learners do not succeed on courses to develop their English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good enough and varies too much between subject areas. Teaching is often ineffective in helping learners to achieve their maximum potential.
- The take-up of additional learning support varies across the college, and this provision is not always effective.
- Provision in humanities and social sciences is inadequate.
- Curriculum management is not sufficiently effective in bringing about sustained improvement in all areas of the college.
- Collaboration across the college is underdeveloped and this limits the sharing of good practice.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is insufficient in a minority of areas of the college.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Learners value the very wide range of courses and other activities offered by the college and attend well for classes.
- Links with a wide range of community partners and employers are highly effective in helping learners progress at work and in developing both work-related and personal skills.
- Training for apprentices is good, both in the workplace and when they attend college for classes.
- The college's leadership is developing a more consultative and learner-focused culture.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that judgements made about the quality of lessons focus primarily on the progress that learners make, and that the subsequent dialogue between the teacher and lesson observer identifies precisely how to improve learners' progress.
- Through the initiatives already implemented, and the insights of those teachers whose practice is already good or better, develop the ability of all teachers to become more reflective practitioners with high expectations for what learners can achieve.
- Take urgent action to identify and remedy the significant weaknesses in many humanities and social sciences subjects, focusing particularly on improving the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of management in these subjects.
- Develop more frequent and better opportunities, integrated into their courses, for all learners to improve their skills in English and mathematics.
- Strengthen curriculum management by ensuring that quality assurance arrangements are consistently robust, and that the performance of all courses is evaluated more accurately. In particular, use information on learners' progress rigorously to evaluate the quality of individual subjects and to hold teachers more accountable.
- Improve both the take-up and effectiveness of additional learning support through implementing fully the plan for this provision already in place, leading to clear actions to improve the support across the college.

Inspection judgements

| Outcomes for learners | Requires improvement |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The overall proportion of learners completing their courses successfully is satisfactory. Success rates are high for learners who study for a full A level, but learners taking AS levels do not perform as well: their success rates have remained static at around the national average for sixth form colleges for the last five years. The proportion of learners who successfully achieve their vocational qualifications is broadly comparable to the national average for 2010/11. ▪ The overall success rates for different types of qualifications comprise significant variations in the wide range of subject areas. For example, most learners who begin vocational courses in information and communication technology (ICT), hospitality and catering, sport and performing arts are successful; however, those studying in early years, engineering, hair and beauty and business administration are less likely to succeed. It is a similarly variable pattern for learners on AS- and A-level courses in different subjects. ▪ At intermediate level, success rates for apprentices are satisfactory. Around two thirds complete their qualification in the timescale planned when they started the course. Success rates for advanced apprentices have declined significantly over the last year and are now below the national average. This is due in part to the withdrawal of two partner employers as a result of the adverse economic climate and the consequent loss of learners who did not complete their training. ▪ Learners on community-based courses develop good personal and workplace skills. Many make good progress and move to higher level courses which lead to a qualification. ▪ Too many learners on AS- and A-level courses do not make the progress expected of them based on their attainment before coming to the college. This has been the case in a significant number of subjects for the last three years. The proportion achieving high-grade passes is below average. Most learners on BTEC courses make satisfactory or good progress relative to their prior attainment. | |

- The overall standard of learners' work is satisfactory. It is high in sports and visual and performing arts, where learners use their increased confidence and the good teaching to develop good skills, but standards are lower in science, mathematics, humanities and social sciences. The development of many learners' higher-order thinking and independent learning skills is weak.
- The college has been successful in narrowing the achievement gaps overall between some groups of learners, most notably men and women, although some noticeable gaps still exist at different levels of qualifications. Learners with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities have not performed as well as other learners over the last two years. This gap in performance is particularly significant on advanced level courses.
- Learners' attendance is good in all subject areas and at all college sites. Their punctuality is satisfactory. Learners feel safe, but the behaviour of some learners outside the classroom at the Eastbourne campus requires improvement. Many learners benefit from making a positive contribution to the college and wider community through their studies and their successful participation in regional and national competitions.
- Learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses demonstrate good improvements in both their spoken and written English. The development of learners' English and mathematical skills is improving across the college. However, success rates for functional skills courses were very poor in 2010/11. Despite a significant improvement in 2011/12, they remain low, particularly at intermediate level. The high-grade success rates for those learners taking GCSE English and mathematics are similarly low.
- Learners' progression between levels of study is satisfactory overall. Data on the destinations of learners outside the college are not yet complete and the college's own self-assessment recognises this is an area for improvement. A reasonable proportion of learners are successful in progressing to higher education, with just over one fifth joining prestigious universities.

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| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement; the college's success rates and the variability of learners' experiences in different subject areas reflect this. The college has placed great emphasis on improving teaching, learning and assessment over the last two years. Its judgement that the majority of teaching and learning sessions are good or better does not reflect the outcomes of the inspection. College lesson observers do not focus sufficiently on what learners are learning in lessons or on how much subsequent progress they make.
- Where teaching, learning and assessment are good; teachers have high expectations for learners and set high standards. They plan lessons well and use a variety of active learning techniques that enthuse and engage learners and which take account of their individual needs.
- In the good lessons, teachers use effective questioning techniques to extend learning and to encourage discussion. This enables learners to develop their higher-level thinking skills and understanding. Teachers check learners' knowledge and understanding regularly and learners make good progress. Apprentices receive good training on workplace learning programmes.
- Too many lessons require improvement. In these classes, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for all learners. They set tasks without reference to learners' individual needs and abilities and do not provide those more able learners who finish them quickly with activities to stretch and challenge them further.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not use questioning effectively to encourage discussion and to help learners develop their own ideas. In some classes, teachers pose questions and then provide the answers themselves without allowing sufficient time for learners to formulate their own thoughts and answers.
- The development of learners' skills in English and mathematics is improving but varies too much across the college. College managers are very aware of the reasons for this and have recently

put in place a detailed improvement plan which is starting to have a positive impact. In music, learners develop their numerical skills particularly well through using notation, intervals and chords.

- Teachers’ assessment of learners’ work is not consistently good across the college. In visual and performing arts, teachers provide detailed and regular feedback which helps learners to improve their work, and learners on sports courses receive supportive and constructive comments to achieve better grades. In other subject areas, feedback is often perfunctory and is not sufficiently developmental to help learners make further progress.
- Learners benefit from effective initial advice and guidance which ensures they enrol on the right courses. Learners value tutorials in many areas of the college and speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers and personal tutors. Apprentices receive particularly good support. However, target setting is often not sufficiently specific to help learners to improve and to make the progress expected of them.
- Advice and guidance after initial assessment are not sufficiently effective in encouraging those learners who need additional learning support to take it up. As recognised by the college, approximately one third of the learners identified as requiring support for their learning needs does not then receive it. Too many learners with additional learning needs do not succeed in achieving their qualification, particularly at advanced level.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good in some curriculum areas, such as visual and performing arts, but the way in which teachers integrate these themes into their lessons in other subjects is less successful. Not all teachers ensure that learning materials and classroom discussion challenge stereotypical pre-conceptions about people’s diverse characteristics and lifestyles.

Health and social care

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement in health and social care. Success rates have improved significantly in the last year to be at, or above, national rates on many courses, but some programmes have performed less well and this reflects the variable quality of teaching and the assessment of learners’ work.
- Some learners produce good quality work and progress well in lessons. However, teachers’ planning and delivery of theoretical aspects of the subject area do not adequately meet learners’ individual needs or sufficiently promote wider workplace skills. Too many lessons focus solely on the completion of tasks, with all learners being given activities to complete at the same pace. Teachers’ use of question-and-answer techniques does not challenge the more able learners sufficiently.
- Managers and teachers are very supportive of learners and are highly motivated and responsive in ensuring their welfare. A culture of mutual respect exists between teachers and learners and attendance and behaviour are good. Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate expertise in their subject areas. However, they do not always use this expertise sufficiently well to plan lessons to maximise learning.
- Learners on some courses develop good workplace skills through high quality placements with employers. External speakers from a wide range of professional backgrounds enhance learners’ knowledge of career opportunities. Managers’ decision to withdraw work placements on a small number of courses has disadvantaged some learners.
- Learners value the college’s virtual learning environment (VLE) and the way it enables them to obtain information about lessons they miss and upload their work for assessment. However, the

VLE is underused, particularly by more able learners who would benefit from its use for extension activities.

- Teachers provide an appropriate range of written and verbal feedback about learners' assessed work. In some cases, the feedback is detailed and encourages learners to improve their work and gain better grades. However, feedback is not consistently good across all subjects. Some is insufficiently detailed and contains little correction of poor grammar and spelling.
- Well-qualified teachers develop learners' English and mathematical skills effectively. However, the planning of some lessons does not identify suitable opportunities in the context of the subject to develop learners' basic skills.
- Assessment of learners' skills and needs at the start of their courses is appropriate. Advice and guidance are effective in placing learners on the right programmes. Learners, their parents or carers and teachers can all easily locate the targets set for students which are stored electronically on the VLE. Teachers monitor learners' progress appropriately through regular reviews which are recorded on individual learning plans, but do not always use the reviews effectively to encourage learners to achieve higher grades.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped. Displays in some classrooms effectively reinforce positive views of people's differences. However, teachers often miss opportunities to incorporate learning about different cultures, religions and groups in lessons and a small number of them use inappropriate stereotypes in learning resources.

Science and mathematics

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement in science and mathematics. Learners in these subject areas generally have relatively high prior levels of attainment. Although learning outcomes are broadly satisfactory, and some learners achieve at levels above those expected, too many learners do not make the progress expected of them.
- In the better lessons, teachers use their skills well to encourage learners to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond their current abilities. For example, in one class, mathematicians dealt well with complex functions and their transformations and discussed strategies for solving problems confidently. However, in most lessons, teachers' low expectations of learners lead to insufficient challenge.
- Teachers plan lessons appropriately to ensure learners understand the basic concepts of the subject. Interactive group work is effective in allowing learners to develop their interest and enthusiasm for a topic. However, teachers do not always plan classes effectively to take account of learners' individual needs, and in many lessons all the learners do the same work. This results in insufficient challenge for learners of different abilities. In some cases, the hints that teachers give, whilst helpful to the less able, do not allow the more capable learners to develop their own analytical skills.
- In the better lessons, teachers use questions designed to encourage learners to participate actively in their own learning, to consider in greater depth the topics being discussed and to encourage learners' interaction. However, in most lessons, teachers use questions solely to encourage recall of mathematical formulae and scientific facts rather than to assess accurately how well learners are progressing. Teachers often answer questions posed by learners themselves rather than using them to engender further discussion and understanding.
- The resources in laboratories are good. Learners receive health and safety briefings at appropriate points in their courses and are able to implement the necessary precautions in practical settings, for example when handling flammable substances.

- Some learners find the resources available on the VLE, such as worksheets and examination practice papers, extremely useful. However, too many do not yet use it as an interactive learning resource to develop their independent learning or to provide themselves with activities that stretch and challenge their learning.
- The assessment of learners’ progress requires improvement. Learners receive feedback on their written work in a timely manner, but the poor quality of many comments does not ensure that they will then be able to progress further.
- Teachers identify those learners likely to struggle in their studies but the support they receive to overcome their difficulties requires improvement. Learners’ targets often do not relate sufficiently to their own particular circumstances or abilities and are frequently not challenging enough.
- Learners benefit from teachers being available outside lessons for extra support. However, less able learners do not always receive the targeted support they need, and the more competent learners miss out on opportunities to explore the wider applications of science and mathematics which would stimulate their interest.

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| Sport | |
| Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+ | Good |

- Teaching, learning and assessment in sport are good. This is reflected in the high success rates on both academic and vocational courses and the good skills that learners develop. Highly motivated teachers set high standards and expectations for learners. With a few exceptions, standards of behaviour are very good in lessons.
- Teachers are well qualified and maintain their subject expertise through continuous professional development and involvement in sports outside the college. Most teachers have an expertise in a particular sport and teach subjects that match their specialist areas well. Top-level rugby and football players teach and coach learners who participate fully in the college’s sports academies.
- Teachers integrate theory and practical teaching well in lessons. Good class management ensures that lively groups retain their focus on learning through a wide range of stimulating activities. For example, in a theory lesson about sports coaching, learners watched a video of themselves attempting to kick a rugby ball and then recorded each aspect of the technique as if they were coaching that skill.
- Learning is personalised according to each learner’s needs. Teachers use learners’ own particular sporting interests and talents to add relevance to their learning. They encourage learners to evaluate their own work and to work cooperatively with other learners. The provision of sports academies enhances opportunities for learners to develop skills in their chosen sports.
- Teachers provide good written feedback on assessed work, annotating and correcting scripts in detail. The feedback that learners receive is supportive and constructive. The feedback for those learners studying for examinations gives advice on minimum target grades and how they can improve them. Teachers encourage learners to use technical language in their written work in order to show a more detailed knowledge of the subject area.
- The provision and take up of additional learning support requires improvement. College staff assess learners’ starting points appropriately, but do not then encourage all those who need support to take it up. The behaviour of a small number of learners with additional support needs is poor.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for learners to develop their language and communication skills during sports classes. For example, in a sports massage theory lesson, the teacher required learners working in pairs to give short presentations to the whole class. She reinforced

the Latin names of muscles very effectively, breaking the words down to develop learners' understanding rather than requiring them to learn the names by rote.

- Teachers make good use of a diverse range of role models in lessons to promote equality and diversity. Examples of good practice in coaching drawn from minority sports help to broaden learners' understanding of the wide range of people involved in playing and coaching different sports. Interesting debates in lessons highlight the reasons why some sporting personalities are better known than others.
- Learners on sports coaching courses lead classes covering a range of sports activities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. This promotes integration between the two groups and helps all those involved to improve their confidence and self-esteem in dealing with people from different backgrounds and abilities.

Visual and performing arts

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners enjoy their studies, make good progress and value their learning. A significant number of learners achieve high grades. They value the extensive support they receive from teachers.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, well qualified and have high expectations of learners. They convey a realistic picture of the skills and standards required by both employers and higher education which raises learners' aspirations. Most learners aspire to achieve high standards. Teachers extend learning very effectively by probing and challenging learners' ideas. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not adapt their teaching sufficiently to ensure that all learners achieve their full potential.
- Teachers plan lessons well and assignments are interesting and relevant to learners' lives, thereby engaging their interest. Learners benefit from a wide choice of tasks and exploration which extend their learning and generate enthusiasm. They work purposefully in a supportive, adult environment and learn well from group critiques, performances and peer review.
- The standard of learners' work is good and demonstrates the acquisition of a wide range of skills. In dance and performing arts, learners work keenly in a well-disciplined environment and develop refined skills, personal responsibility and independence. Learners in visual arts enjoy a wide range of media and produce highly individual interpretations from assignment briefs. Music learners work in a professional environment which replicates industry standards.
- Teachers know their learners well and learners value the support that staff provide willingly. Attendance is good and learners extend their learning by attending college for self-directed study. Open workshops provide good additional support. Progression to other courses and higher education is good.
- In most cases, teachers provide detailed feedback which helps learners improve their work. However, in a few lessons, teachers rely too much on verbal feedback and learners are unclear about the improvements required to their work. Teachers set clear targets for achievement and monitor learners' progress closely. Learners benefit from regular meetings with their tutor and are confident enough to ask for help. They understand the progress they make and this motivates them to achieve higher grades for their work.
- Learners receive encouragement to read about their subject extensively to improve their understanding and use of language. They develop good numerical skills in music through theory and practice. In visual arts, learners improve their numeracy through accurate drawing, scaling and modelling. All learners work very well together in a cooperative manner.
- Enrolment procedures are stringent and learners are very aware of the demands of their course. They receive valuable information and advice from structured sessions on higher education and

career opportunities. Teachers encourage performing arts learners to attend plays and shows. Music learners participate in choirs and other performances. Trips and visits extend learners' experience and some become involved in valuable community projects.

- Visual arts learners produce eye-catching and thought-provoking posters promoting equality and diversity which the college displays around its campuses. In one lesson, performing arts learners extended their understanding of the horrors of war by enacting out cameos simulating their heightened emotions as if they were on the battle field. Teachers celebrate cultural diversity in lessons by drawing on different artists', writers' and musicians' work and exploring colour associations and representation.

Humanities and social sciences

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate in humanities and social sciences. The progress learners make is hindered by the lack of planning to meet individual needs, particularly for those who have achieved very well at GCSE level. Although most learners achieve their qualifications, far too many do not achieve the grades of which they are capable. Success rates have declined in too many subjects in recent years.
- Teachers' expectations of learners are too low. Teachers lack the necessary skills and confidence to develop learners' abilities to analyse and evaluate information. For example, learners in an AS-level psychology lesson were not able to evaluate the research evidence in social psychology.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers link well-planned, learner-centred activities effectively to the assignment requirements of the course. For example, in a religious studies class about Freud's views on religion, learners had to plan the structure of an essay by manipulating key cards in small groups and then developing these ideas on a flow diagram poster.
- In most lessons, planning is weak with little evidence of extension activities. In a sociology class, very able learners completed individual short exercises rapidly and then sat passively waiting for the next activity. Learners often work through a series of repetitive tasks without exploring the subject in depth. This results in superficial learning and little development of research or analytical skills.
- Teachers use formative assessment infrequently and, in many cases, poorly, to check and extend learners' understanding. Learners in a psychology lesson on health psychology used mini-whiteboards to demonstrate their learning, but the teacher did not ask all of them to hold up their boards to check they had all understood the topic. Most questioning techniques do not check or extend learning.
- A minority of learners develop the research skills necessary for higher education through the extended project qualification. However, most learners do not develop sufficiently good presentation, communication or teamwork skills through lessons or enrichment activities. Too few learners use subject-specific terminology with confidence and many refer to anecdotal evidence rather than the research evidence drawn from the subject area.
- Teachers use the GCSE scores of individual learners to set a minimum target grade for each subject. Learners are aware of these grades, but teachers do not use this information routinely to plan their lessons to ensure that all learners' needs are met.
- The feedback provided to learners on their homework lacks sufficient detail and does not help them to improve the evaluative aspects of their writing. Learners do not complete sufficient work outside of lessons which hinders the progress they make. In a minority of subjects, learners receive concise and focused feedback which highlights key strengths and actions necessary for them to improve their grades.

- Learners do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their English or mathematical skills. In a good example of a class where this did happen, the geography teacher supported learners to develop their numerical skills through using data on household types and converting this to percentages and then to angles so as to produce a pie chart illustrating the breakdown of housing types in two local areas.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom and throughout the curriculum in this area is weak. The lack of exploration of cultural and diversity topics restricts learning. In a lesson on social class, illustrative examples were ethnocentric and failed to take account of the learners’ varied backgrounds.

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| ESOL | |
| Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+ | Good |

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in ESOL, and this is reflected in the good development of spoken and written skills in English, the high success rates on many courses and the good progression to more advanced programmes.
- Teachers are very well qualified and highly experienced. They set high expectations for learners through their planning of schemes of work and lessons, and display high energy levels in the classroom when using a wide range of active learning strategies that engage and challenge learners successfully.
- Learners make good progress in developing all aspects of their language skills. They enjoy their learning. Learners listen to each other, and the teacher, carefully and are able to use new vocabulary and grammatical structures correctly when working in pairs or small groups. Learners on foundation level courses can complete extended writing tasks successfully in a range of styles. A few teachers do not give sufficient attention to the development of correct pronunciation.
- Teachers take care in their planning of lessons to identify how they will meet learners’ individual needs. They are sensitive in the way they group learners and in their use of a range of activities that enable all learners to complete tasks successfully and to make good progress. Teachers create and maintain good relationships with learners. They use humour carefully and celebrate, and build on, learners’ cultural differences to bring new insights to their learning.
- In a small minority of lessons, more able learners finish tasks quickly and have short periods of time when they are inactive. Teachers use ILT effectively, but learners in some classes do not have sufficient opportunity to use smart boards or other interactive learning resources themselves.
- Teachers use small, informal assessments skilfully in many classes to correct and check learning. Well-planned question-and-answer strategies ensure that learning progresses beyond just the recall of knowledge and facts and that learners feel challenged to extend their understanding and skills.
- Individual learning plans are particularly effective when learners use them on a regular basis to monitor their progress towards curriculum targets. Teachers check and annotate the plans frequently.
- Staff use pre-course interviews and initial assessment well to place learners on the right level of course. They plan their classes using information from regular assessments to ensure that peer support is always available. Learners receive good support and staff follow up outside the classroom those learners who have difficulties in attending lessons.
- Learners receive well-directed advice towards the end of their courses and a high proportion progress to higher level courses. Each year, several learners progress on to university. One

learner was supported in applying for a post as a learning support assistant and is now employed by the college to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good and takes place through specific curriculum-related events such as ethnic and cultural celebrations and meals.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The Principal and governors have set a clear and well-considered strategic direction for the college. This vision, underpinned by an appropriate set of core values, is designed to promote a culture in which all staff work together to ensure that learners reach their potential and that the college does all it can to serve the needs and interests of the varied communities it serves. Although progress is being made in meeting the detailed aims and objectives outlined in its strategy, the college's teaching and learning are not yet consistently good across the provision, and nor are learners' achievements.
- Governors, who have considerable expertise and a good range of skills, receive detailed and accurate briefings that report on progress in meeting the strategic objectives and other important targets. As a result, they are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the college's academic and financial performance. Arrangements for governors to fulfil all their duties properly are very good.
- The college's judgements on the quality of lessons are significantly more positive than inspection evidence shows, partly because observations of classes place too little emphasis on the progress that learners make. In too many instances, it is difficult to reconcile curriculum managers' views that teaching and learning are of high quality with the data showing that learners' progress on too many courses is satisfactory or worse.
- Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning are rightly focused on both improving teachers' capabilities and developing learners' abilities to be thoughtful, independent learners. Many of these initiatives are relatively new and are yet to have a demonstrable impact on learners' achievements. However, they have started to have a positive effect in promoting more reflective discussions on the characteristics of successful learning throughout the college.
- College leaders recognise that previous systems for the performance management of staff have not had sufficient impact and are introducing a revised system to focus more on the key characteristics of good performance. Although the previous arrangements for teachers' appraisal have had significant shortcomings, the college is, in most instances, rectifying poor performance appropriately. A small, but significant, number of staff do not yet have sufficiently high expectations of what their learners can achieve.
- Self-assessment arrangements are comprehensive and result in analyses that the college bases appropriately on a wide range of suitable and relevant evidence, including learners' views. On occasion, some judgements are overly generous. The college produces a wealth of useful data to inform self-evaluation and quality assurance. However, the ability of managers at all levels to interpret and use these data effectively to make judgements and to develop plans for improvement requires improvement. Intervention to secure improved performance on some courses has been successful, but this is not consistent across the college.
- Although there has been an increase in collaborative work between staff in different parts of the college, there remains scope for considerable improvement in the extent to which the college makes best use of the collective wisdom of teachers engaged in the same, or similar, activities on different sites. The college is making progress in removing some of the barriers between different historical cultures within the college, but does not always strike the right balance between healthy competition and collective endeavour to best meet learners' interests.
- The college offers a curriculum designed to meet a very wide variety of needs in the communities it serves. Despite financial pressures that have necessitated significant savings being made, college leaders have done all they can to maintain a broad and responsive curriculum. The college's work with a wide range of partners, including employers, is highly

effective. It makes a significant contribution to providing courses that help those previously disengaged from education, training or work to become re-engaged.

- Equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are key values in the college and much cross-college activity is effective in raising learners' awareness of equality and diversity and in celebrating social differences. Actions to ensure learners with a recognised learning difficulty and/or disability achieve as well as other learners have yet to be fully successful.
- Arrangements to ensure the physical safety and well-being of learners are very good. The college meets its legislative requirements in this regard fully and the college goes beyond its statutory duties in ensuring that learners' health, safety and well-being have a high profile throughout the college.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Sussex Downs College

| Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate | Overall | 16-18 Learning programmes | 19+ Learning programmes | Apprenticeships | Other work-based learning | Community learning |
|--|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 2 |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 2 |

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|--|--------------|
| Health and social care | 3 |
| Science | 3 |
| Mathematics and statistics | 3 |
| Sport | 2 |
| Visual Arts | 2 |
| Performing arts | 2 |
| Humanities | 4 |
| Social Sciences | 4 |
| ESOL | 2 |

Provider details

| Sussex Downs College | |
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| Type of provider | General further education college |
| Age range of learners | 14+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | Full-time: 4,842 |
| | Part-time: 10,352 |
| Principal/CEO | Melanie Hunt |
| Date of previous inspection | April 2007 |
| Website address | www.sussexdowns.ac.uk |

| Provider information at the time of the inspection | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|------|----------|------|---------|-----|-------------------|-----|
| Main course or learning programme level | Level 1 or below | | Level 2 | | Level 3 | | Level 4 and above | |
| | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships) | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 409 | 101 | 653 | 57 | 3256 | 365 | 1 | 0 |
| Part-time | 161 | 1536 | 157 | 2066 | 196 | 304 | 1 | 77 |
| Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | | |
| | 200 | 296 | 78 | 278 | 0 | 8 | | |
| Number of learners aged 14-16 | 285 | | | | | | | |
| Number of community learners | 2597 | | | | | | | |
| Number of employability learners | 2112 | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from | Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency | | | | | | | |

At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:

- East Sussex County Council
- Premier Training
- Partnerships for Business & Learning
- Go-Train

Additional socio-economic information

Sussex Downs College is a large general further education college on the south coast of England. The college has three main sites and serves the communities of Eastbourne, Lewes, Newhaven and Wealden in the main, which include rural as well as urban areas. The main employment in the area is in care, leisure and other service operations and in professional occupations. The number of pupils in East Sussex schools attaining five GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics was slightly below the national average in 2011/12, having fallen slightly from the previous year.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Moore HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and nine additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy principal, curriculum and skills, as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, draft updates on self-assessment for 2011/12 and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements.

Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement |
|---------|----------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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