

Epping Forest College

General further education college

Inspection dates		20 – 24 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This college requires improvement because:

- teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good; very little teaching is outstanding, and too much requires improvement
- a significant minority of teachers are not sufficiently skilled in deploying teaching and learning techniques that help individual students to make the best progress possible
- the progress that students make compared with their starting points, particularly on courses at level 3, is not sufficiently rapid
- the quality of provision in mathematics and English requires improvement; neither teaching, nor students' achievements, are good enough, and attendance at lessons in these subjects is low
- although progress is being made in meeting the requirements of study programmes for younger students, too many do not benefit from a sufficiently broad curriculum or from significant external work experience.

This college has the following strengths:

- under the direction of a new Principal, senior leaders have taken decisive action to raise standards by focusing determinedly on improving teaching, learning and assessment, and have strengthened significantly the college's capacity to improve
- a high proportion of students complete their main qualification successfully
- effective management has improved provision for apprentices and their outcomes
- links with employers and local strategic partnerships, including the Chamber of Commerce, are increasingly strong; leaders and governors are broadening the college's curriculum well to focus more on employers' needs, and increasing and diversifying apprenticeship provision
- students from diverse backgrounds mix particularly well, and the staff provide a safe and harmonious atmosphere
- prudent financial management has resulted in the college being in a good position to rise to the challenges presented by stringent resource constraints.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers' training and development, including the feedback that they receive following lesson observations, focuses on helping them to improve the range of techniques that they deploy to make sure students of all abilities make rapid progress both in and out of lessons.
- Take decisive and rapid steps to support teachers on all English and mathematics courses to improve their own subject knowledge and develop their understanding of how to inspire students of differing abilities to work with determination to improve their underpinning knowledge and skills. Ensure that all staff implement rigorous procedures to raise attendance in functional skills and GCSE lessons.
- Review and strengthen the college's response to study programmes for younger students by using the developing links with employers to increase the quality and quantity of work experience. Review and modify the curriculum so that all students on study programmes receive a rich and balanced programme of education and training that prepares them well for their next steps.
- Develop further the ability of leaders and managers at all levels to monitor and evaluate all key aspects of provision, particularly the quality of teaching. Determine the key priorities for improvement, share these with all staff, and implement them through effective management of teachers and other staff to secure and sustain high standards of quality and performance.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- The large majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and taking study programmes, with the largest number on courses at level 3. The most popular subjects are the creative arts and business studies. Large numbers of students are studying for English and mathematics qualifications, mainly at level 2 and below. A small number of adult learners study full time, with many more on part-time and short courses. Apprenticeship programmes, mainly in engineering and business administration, are followed by around 250 learners, a significantly higher number than in the previous year.
- A very high proportion of students complete their studies, and although pass rates fell slightly in 2013/14 most achieve the main qualification of their study programme at levels 2 and 3. For both vocational and academic qualifications, success rates are high in most subject areas and have increased substantially over the last three years. Students on programmes at level 1 benefit from extensive experience in several vocational areas. However, students are less successful in other aspects of their study programme. Students' attendance at lessons requires improvement, particularly in mathematics and English.
- At levels 1 and 2, achievements in English and mathematics qualifications, and in particular in GCSE examinations in both subjects, were poor in 2013/14. Only a small proportion of students who enrolled at college with a grade D in their GCSEs achieved a grade C or above at the end of the course. Results in functional skills qualification are better, but still require improvement.
- The college attracts younger students with widely varying abilities and GCSE results. At level 3, although students make good progress in a minority of subjects, a significant proportion do not make as much progress as they should in comparison with their prior attainment. Students' progress in improving their English and mathematics at level 2 and below is too slow. College

leaders are developing provision to ensure that students who already have grades A* to C in these subjects at GCSE continue to improve their skills, but so far this has not been successful.

- The proportion of apprentices who complete their training successfully on time has risen significantly since the last inspection and is high. Apprenticeship provision is expanding and arrangements for ensuring that success rates remain high are secure.
- Adult learners, both on full-time programmes and on short courses, achieve well; as with younger students, most achieve their vocational qualification and develop good employability skills. The small number of learners on provision that the college subcontracts to other providers achieve well.
- The college attracts students from diverse social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and no significant variations exist in the achievement or progress of different groups. Students who need extra help with their studies benefit from the good support they receive, and achieve as well as their peers. Students on discrete provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in developing work-related skills.
- Teachers on vocational programmes focus well on preparing students for employment, and in several vocational areas, for example sport, hairdressing and the arts, links with employers are good. However, not enough students, at all levels, benefit from significant external work experience as part of their study programme. Managers have been slow to ensure that students on courses at level 1 have external work experience as the central aim of their programme.
- Managers have not yet done enough to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and focused on progression to the next step to meet fully the requirements of individual study programmes. Too many students do not benefit from a wide enough range of enrichment or additional qualifications to supplement their main qualification.
- Most students and apprentices achieve their ambitions to progress to further education or training, higher education or employment. An increasing number of students move on to apprenticeships. However, the destinations of the small number of students who do not achieve their qualifications is not always known.
- The standard of students' work, and the level of their practical skills, varies too much across subjects. In hairdressing and creative subjects, much work is of a high standard and electrical installation students have high levels of skills. Standards are improving on A-level courses and in English literature, students analyse text impressively. However, in several subjects, including motor vehicle engineering, mathematics and English, standards are not sufficiently high. In a minority of subjects, such as business studies and sport, more-able students do not always produce work that reflects their potential.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Specialist inspectors graded teaching, learning and assessment in six subject areas, while team inspectors visited every other significant subject area in the college. Inspectors observed most college-based teachers in lessons. They did not observe off-site training and assessment for apprentices.
- Although the large majority of students complete their main qualification successfully, teachers take insufficient account of students' existing knowledge when planning learning activities and, as a result, too many students make slow progress. Teachers, especially those in vocational areas, often lack the skills and confidence to prepare students well for their English and mathematics examinations.
- Weaker lessons are characterised by a formulaic approach to learning that covers the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve the qualification, but does not give sufficient opportunity for students to explore ideas in depth, or develop higher-level practical skills. Teachers'

expectations of what students can achieve are frequently too low; consequently they give students work or tasks that are not sufficiently difficult.

- In subject areas where provision is good, teachers use their experience and expertise well to ensure that students develop a range of vocational skills and knowledge that prepare them well for employment or further study. Most teachers are adept at replicating realistic vocational scenarios, and promote high professional standards in lessons. Students understand theory and can apply this well to practical tasks. Resources in classrooms are of a high standard, with up-to-date facilities for students to use and practise their skills. In hairdressing, students work to demanding deadlines that they would experience at work to complete a series of hairstyles in time for a photo-shoot.
- In most subjects, teachers encourage students to work independently outside lessons, although the extent to which they do so is inconsistent. In the better instances, students collaborate well to use good information and learning technology resources in, for example, project work and preparing for lessons. The virtual learning environment is well resourced in most subject areas, but contains scant resources other than basic course materials in a minority.
- Teachers and other staff prepare students, and apprentices well for their next steps. The strong focus on employability in study programmes raises students' awareness of the choices open to them, and in tutorials students practise and refine their interview skills and receive help with applications for work. Good and improving links with employers benefit students. However, opportunities for students at each level to undertake significant external work experience are currently limited in most subject areas, and this component of study programmes is underdeveloped.
- Students benefit from good care and guidance that supports them to complete their courses. Pastoral tutors attached to each subject area work collaboratively with teachers to intervene quickly to support students who are struggling to complete their courses. Students who need extra help with their studies are identified at enrolment and college staff discuss and agree, in consultation with parents and carers, an appropriate package of support.
- In a significant minority of subject areas, teachers do not track students' progress well enough. They do not use developmental questioning or other assessment techniques in lessons to deepen students' understanding and to check their learning. Teachers often give good verbal feedback to students on their progress with tasks during lessons. However, they do not always provide enough written feedback on individual students' work to enable them to identify quickly what they must do to improve. Written targets are set to remind students of assessment deadlines or to complete homework, but not to give students precise details on how to improve their work.
- Students applying to university receive good advice and guidance both on their choice of course and on how to tailor their personal statement to optimise their chances of success. Tutorials prepare students well for the financial and other challenges of further study.
- The teaching of GCSE and functional skills English and mathematics requires improvement. Teachers do not use information on students' existing knowledge or skills to tailor the content of lessons to ensure that each student makes good progress. In the majority of lessons, students work on the same task and, as a result, a minority find the work too easy and do not learn any new skills, while others find the work too difficult and are not able to complete the task. Vocational teachers have received training on integrating English and mathematics into their teaching and consequently most are more adept at helping students to improve their skills as part of their vocational studies.
- Teachers ensure that the diversity of the college community is celebrated through their choice of learning activities and by vibrant and interesting displays in classrooms. They usually make sure that students have a thorough understanding of how they will adapt their working practices to cater for the differing clients they will encounter in their working environments.

Health, social care and early years**16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and consequently the proportion of students who complete their main vocational qualification successfully is high. Students enjoy their studies, make rapid progress, and produce work of a good standard. A high proportion of students progress to further study or relevant employment, such as nursing, teaching or work in the childcare or health care sectors. However, the destination of a small minority is unknown.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students and set them challenging personal targets. Most students on health and social care programmes at level 3 gain higher grades. Students at all levels develop a wide range of practical skills essential for working in the caring sector. For example, students on childcare programmes at level 3 worked well as a team to reflect on the influence of diet on the development of young children before collectively planning a learning activity to promote healthy eating.
- Teachers use their vocational experience to illustrate real-life scenarios to deepen students' understanding. In a health and social care lesson, the teacher guided a discussion on the types and signs of abuse sensitively, creating a safe environment to discuss a difficult topic. Careful questioning enabled individuals to explain their responsibility for safeguarding in the workplace.
- Teachers plan work experience well and it is of good quality, enabling students on programmes at level 2 and 3 to put their knowledge and skills into practice. Students benefit from hearing one another's detailed accounts of their work experience. Teachers prepare students at level 1 for work experience through building a range of skills, such as teamwork and problem solving. They benefit from visiting speakers from health and childcare, and gain some external experience through fund-raising activities for a charity.
- Students value highly the very good support they receive. Rigorous advice and guidance ensure that students enrol on the appropriate study programmes for their interests and abilities. In collaboration with learning support assistants and pastoral tutors, teachers identify students' specific needs and develop action plans to ensure these are met, both in and out of lessons.
- Teachers use technology well in their lessons. For example, a health and social care group at level 2 enjoyed and benefitted from a film of a pop star with sickle cell disease before completing a short quiz electronically to confirm their understanding. They gained a good understanding of the inherited condition, the groups at risk, and the signs, symptoms and treatment of the illness.
- Teachers use a variety of effective assessment techniques in lessons to check students' progress. They make good use of mini-whiteboards and discussion to check individual learning. However, teachers do not always encourage students to answer questions in sufficient depth, or to relate their answers to the implications for professional practice. Students collaborate well in giving presentations, and give one another supportive critiques of their work.
- Students value the detailed and constructive verbal feedback they receive on assignments. Written feedback is good for adult students on counselling courses, but for younger students in health and social care and childcare, teachers do not provide sufficient detail to students on how to improve their work.
- Teachers reinforce the importance of precise written and spoken English by linking students' communication skills to the work setting. For example, students practise writing accurate accounts of the progress of children in care, and construct detailed support packages for clients. Teachers give a high priority to accurate oral communications, for instance when students provide presentations to the group.

- Teachers are not successful at helping students to improve their mathematics. Too many students struggle to understand straightforward concepts, such as ratio and percentages, that they are likely to need in the workplace.
- Students have a good understanding of equal opportunities and the implications of individual and group differences for their professional practice. They recognise the critical importance of treating different groups with equal respect, and of tailoring services to meet different groups' needs. Students understand how to keep themselves, and those for whom they care, safe from harm.

Engineering and motor vehicle

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in the variability in students' progress and the standard of their work. Students' achievements in electrical engineering have improved steadily over the last three years and are good. However, too few students in motor vehicle learn consistently well and make good progress. A significant minority of students miss too many lessons.
- In motor vehicle engineering, too many lessons require improvement because teachers do not consistently extend students' learning beyond the requirements of the vocational qualification. Teachers too often base lesson objectives on students completing tasks rather than developing their skills and knowledge. Activities in lessons are at times mundane or repetitive, and students make slow progress.
- Teaching does not focus enough on developing learning outside lessons. Homework is not set routinely, and as a result the expectations of the amount of work that students should do are too low.
- The best teachers are very flexible in their use of a wide range of teaching approaches that ensure all students learn successfully, regardless of their ability levels. For example, in a stunning lesson on lighting design, students used a wide range of formulae, trigonometry and vector diagrams very accurately to model the needs for a wide range of industrial, hospital and domestic scenarios.
- Students enjoy practical lessons. Student electricians relish the opportunity to design, install and test domestic circuits. In motor vehicle, students develop appropriate repair techniques and highly relevant fault-finding skills. All engineering students adopt safe working practices and minimise risk to themselves and others.
- Managers are yet to develop arrangements to ensure that all students benefit from external work experience. Enrichment opportunities are limited, but include some trips to employers, and additional qualifications, for instance in servicing vehicle air-conditioning systems.
- Assessment of students' work is accurate. Teachers support students to revise and re-submit their practical and written work to raise standards, which is helping to improve current students' achievement, particularly in electrical engineering. Across engineering, teachers place too little emphasis on developing good study and writing skills to improve employability or progression to higher education.
- Students make good progress in improving their mathematics. They are skilled at interpreting site plans, manufacturers' specifications, and performance and test data to create accurate and safe electrical circuits or diagnose and repair vehicle systems.
- Teachers give insufficient attention to helping students to improve their English, particularly in report writing. Too many students' files are disorganised and teachers do not provide enough

guidance on note-taking or revision skills. Teachers often identify weaknesses in students' grammar and spelling, but give little advice to them on how to rectify errors.

- Students benefit from good personal support staff. Many students take advantage of the additional classes teachers provide in electrical engineering to catch up with, or consolidate, learning.
- Staff direct most students onto the right level of course to meet the requirements of their study programme. However, several students who started on electrical courses at level 2 have been moved down to a level 1 course, and are therefore not progressing to a higher level of study.
- Accommodation is bright and inviting with spacious classrooms and workshops. Teachers use commercial training materials and live data on the internet to improve lessons. The use of digital images and applications on mobile phones supports learning well. However, in motor vehicle too many students work on the limited number of cars at once which slows their progress. Students at level 3 have too little opportunity to work on high-technology products or customers' vehicles.
- Teachers are good role models and set high expectations for behaviour and attitude to work. However, they take few opportunities to use students' personal or workplace experiences to develop customer care skills or to understand better the needs and sensitivities of a culturally diverse workplace and community.

Sport, leisure and recreation

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. As a result, the proportion of students who achieve their main qualification is high, and students develop good work-related skills through work experience in a wide range of sports settings, including local primary schools. A high proportion of students progress to higher education, with others moving straight into employment.
- Teachers use a wide range of interesting activities in lessons to promote learning. For example, in one lesson the use of practical exercises enabled students to gain a good understanding of the effects of physical activity on the cardiovascular system. In another lesson, teachers used peer support effectively to enable students to understand the procedures for using health-monitoring equipment.
- Teachers' skilful questioning in lessons helps students to make good progress and to develop their oral skills. For example, one teacher's astute questioning prompted students to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of working with different customer groups within the fitness industry. In another lesson, analytical questioning enabled students to gain both knowledge and skills in the use of demonstration as a coaching technique.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers design learning activities that are too easy for more-able students. For example, in group work, selected students were instructed to find information, but had to wait to share this with other members of the group until the end of the task. Consequently, students made slower progress in developing an understanding of motivational terms associated with sport and exercise.
- Assessment is good. Assignment briefs have a good vocational context to encourage students to apply their learning to work-related environments, such as sports development. Feedback is accurate and informs improvement. Teachers provide students with many opportunities to practise skills and reinforce their knowledge to prepare them well for assessment.
- Students are aware of their targets and the progress they are making. Students can cite unit target grades and overall performance towards career goals due to good one-to-one support

from course tutors. For example, most students are clear on how they will gain the qualifications and experience required for sports occupations such as coaching and sports management. The use of electronic tracking to record these targets requires further development to be effective.

- Strategies to improve students' English skills are effective. For example, peer review of common spelling and grammatical errors in assessment and subsequent correction was successful. The creation of English 'champions' within group work enables students to proof read and correct written feedback to the class.
- Teachers have not embedded mathematical skills well into vocational lessons in study programmes. They frequently miss opportunities to develop students' basic mathematical skills, for example, calculating percentages when considering the quantities of carbohydrates, proteins and fats in a sports performer's diet. In functional skills lessons tasks are too easy for more-able students.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well. Students gain experience in coaching those from a range of backgrounds that have specific needs, such as performers with disabilities. Students enjoy a variety of activities within their study programmes that celebrate the diverse nature of the college population.
- Students have access to an extensive range of industry-standard sports facilities, including a fitness suite, sports hall and artificial pitch located off site. Teachers use these facilities effectively to provide practical lessons that develop students' coaching skills well. However, the lack of space in the fitness suite to accommodate larger groups slows students' development of work-related skills.

Visual arts

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, particularly for those on courses at level 3, who comprise the vast majority of students. Students on these programmes make good progress in developing their creative skills and achieve their main qualification, although not enough achieve high grades. The small number of students on courses at level 2 do not achieve as well, with too many failing to complete their qualification successfully.
- Teaching promotes learning methods that advance curiosity and enquiry, helping students to develop confidence in experimentation alongside proficiency in software, craft-based skills and art and design techniques that they refine over time. Students respond well to illustration challenges, producing sketches for textile designs and working with increasingly complex software to build digital collages. Fashion students produce strong original work while constructing Gaultier-style garments, making lino prints on a hand-printing machine, and designing textile mini-collections.
- Teachers use their specialist industry knowledge to produce assignments that are exciting for students and contextualise tasks realistically. Vibrant, attractive open-plan classrooms encourage flexibility, presenting opportunities for cross-subject learning. Teachers and students use technology well to create, review and present work. Students' confidence and ability in manipulating creative software and media are improving their productivity in documenting, editing and presenting their work.
- Students work well collaboratively. For example, in a fashion technology lesson a student coached her group well to implement the dart element while assembling pattern pieces. However, students' lack of knowledge about key artists reduces their effectiveness in identifying and evaluating the quality of art and design works.

- Teachers review students' progress with project work, portfolios and sketchbooks frequently, and highlight how students can improve their work. However, skilful questioning to assess students' knowledge of artistic and technical qualities in art and design is too infrequent in group discussions. The targets teachers set students to improve their written work lack a sharp focus.
- Students make good progress in practising English skills in written and oral work, and in group presentations. Throughout the subject area, staff highlight well key words in resources and displays. Specialist glossaries of subject terminology support students' written work.
- Teachers raise awareness of key mathematical terms, but they are not effective in making use of mathematics in lessons. Teachers refer to scale and geometry in ceramics and ratios in photography, but students do not apply these concepts through doing calculations. Teachers introduce students to the potential of mathematics when considering relative sizes in a digital collage activity and in using proportions in graphics on packaging design tasks.
- Students develop their understanding of the creative industries when teachers make connections to the real-life context and applications of skills in industry. For example, in a lesson exploring packaging design the teacher highlighted the role of an art director and the usefulness of thumbnail images as a tool. However, students' knowledge of the workplace is limited as too few teachers explain sufficiently how practitioners use art and design skills in their work.
- Students receive sound advice and guidance. Pastoral tutors provide timely information about art courses and students' progression options. Staff refer students to specialist teachers to discuss their aspirations, which helps them to gain inspiration and expertise to build their portfolios of work.
- Staff create 'live' briefs that replicate industry conditions, for instance designing logos for a dance festival. Industry weeks offer relevant talks and workshops led by creative industry practitioners. However, arrangements for students to fulfil work-related elements of study programmes are not complete. Too many students do not benefit from external work experience.
- Teachers' references to a diverse range of artists, makers and designers and their good use of global, Western classical and British contemporary art traditions, from Picasso to Pollock to Perry, promotes learning well. Students explore artefacts from different cultures, and they debate ethics on fair trade in fashion. However, students learn little about current equality themes, conventions, behaviours and attitudes relating to employment in the arts industry.

Foundation mathematics

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in students' poor achievements in 2013/14, particularly in GCSE mathematics. Although current students are making better progress, it is too early to gauge the impact of the new arrangements for the provision of mathematics, which managers and teachers have implemented this year, on students' outcomes. A rigorous procedure to ensure that all students without a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics are taking courses at the right level has been introduced successfully. However, evidence of declining attendance to discrete mathematics lessons in several subject areas is a major concern.
- In a significant minority of lessons, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Consequently, the work is either not sufficiently interesting or not demanding enough, and students make slow progress. Teachers pay little attention to the development of good study

skills, or to the importance of clear layout of mathematical calculations to demonstrate both accuracy and understanding.

- Teaching is stronger where specialist teachers have received appropriate training. GCSE teachers have benefited from mathematical enhancement training to supplement their sound mathematical knowledge. In lessons, they provide a wide range of activities and a clear, structured approach to developing students' understanding of key concepts such as algebraic conventions. In these lessons, students are more motivated and make better progress.
- Vocational teachers who teach functional skills classes have not had enough training focusing on techniques to teach mathematics. Teachers plan activities following standard schemes of work, and do not have the flexibility to tailor their lessons to take account of students' different starting points. As a result, in too many functional skills lessons, and a minority of GCSE classes, students' prior mathematical understanding is not built upon effectively. Although group work is often interesting, the tasks set are sometimes too easy for more-able students and too hard for those who struggle with mathematics.
- Resources for teaching are adequate, but many teachers rely too much on generic worksheets. A few vocational teachers develop specific worksheets so that mathematics becomes relevant to students' main subject of study. A good example was in a motor vehicle lesson, where students calculated ratios of anti-freeze to water in coolant systems. Teachers mainly confine their use of learning technologies to giving instructions or showing static examples. In one example of better practice, a teacher made good use of an electronic game to check on previous learning about fractions and percentages.
- Students do not do enough work outside lessons. Few teachers indicate to students where they can find resources for further independent study and only a very small minority of students use the expanding on-line resources to supplement classroom learning.
- The monitoring and assessment of students' progress require improvement. Too few teachers assess students' progress appropriately through a range of activities, including short tests and homework. They do not use targeted questioning skilfully enough or recap learning during, and at the end of, lessons to check students' understanding and consolidate their knowledge.
- Teachers receive frequent training on aspects of mathematics and effective ways of reinforcing the skills in practical and theory lessons, but not enough teachers integrate mathematical skills routinely into their teaching so that students can practise these skills in vocationally-relevant contexts.
- Students receive adequate advice and guidance so that they understand well the importance of mathematical skills in supporting their learning and progression to further training and employment. The identification of students' particular support needs takes place promptly and a team of well-trained learning support assistants work well with students so that they can participate more fully in lessons.
- In lessons, the college focus on equality and diversity is evident in the harmonious, respectful and inclusive atmosphere. Students' behaviour is mostly good. Plans for lessons often identify equality and diversity topics, but teachers rarely grasp opportunities to widen students' horizons and consider differing values and approaches to mathematics.

Business management and accounting

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the high proportion of students who achieve their qualifications. The majority of students make good progress in lessons and their work is of a high standard. Students enjoy their lessons, participate keenly and

are motivated to achieve their qualifications. Attendance at lessons is good, but in business management lessons at level 2, too many students arrive late.

- Students develop very good personal, social and employability skills. Business management students present sales and marketing principles confidently and use role play to demonstrate professional skills such as upselling and dealing with difficult customers. Accounting and finance students present the accountants' guiding principles confidently and discuss how VAT analysis, trade discounts and petty cash analysis can be used in the work environment.
- Students develop very good independent learning skills, which staff encourage by planning practical business and accountancy skills exercises and self-study practical sessions. The setting of challenging short-term targets in class encourages students to achieve well. Students understand what they need to do in order to meet their objectives. Additional activities undertaken outside lessons help students to consolidate their learning. However, more-able students, particularly in business management, do not always receive sufficient challenge to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Very good support for students ensures that they complete their qualifications successfully. Teachers monitor and review students' progress frequently in class. Regular use of continuous assessment helps students to know what they need to do to improve, and tutorial sessions cover students' pastoral needs. However, teachers and tutors do not use the electronic tracking system effectively to set clear long-term targets for students.
- Teachers are appropriately qualified with relevant and recent industry experience, which they use to motivate and encourage students to learn, particularly in accountancy qualifications. Classrooms are well resourced and provide a relaxed, but business-like, learning environment. Teachers use classroom displays to celebrate students' work and students and teachers make good use of information and learning technology to explain and present knowledge clearly.
- Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of thorough feedback. In-class feedback both from peers and tutors encourages students to improve their social and vocational skills. Teachers provide accountancy and finance students with comprehensive written feedback on their cash flow and trading balance calculations. Business management students benefit from comprehensive feedback on their written work.
- Teaching and learning promote a good understanding of English for students. Business management students frequently discuss, and are able to explain, business terminology such as dormant accounts and transactions analysis. Accounting and finance students practise writing end-of-year accounts and executive summaries. All students recognise the importance and relevance of English to their learning goals and career ambitions.
- Teachers ensure that the integral part mathematics plays in all accountancy and finance qualifications is conveyed effectively to students. Accountancy and finance students can complete financial calculations confidently using both estimation and calculation. However, the embedding of mathematics into the majority of business management lessons has not taken place and teachers miss opportunities for these students to practise and improve their mathematical skills.
- Information, advice and guidance are good, and staff place students on the correct programme at the right level. The majority of students progress onto higher-level qualifications or into employment.
- Managers and staff have established effective links with local businesses and accountancy firms. They have successfully implemented work experience for students at level 2 and level 3 who have benefited from feedback from employers. However, managers and teachers have not introduced work experience for students at level 1, although they have substantive plans to start this later in the academic year.
- Through a range of activities, including a thorough induction, students recognise the diversity of their peers within the college. They treat each other with respect and work well within teams. Teachers frequently cover equality and diversity topics during lessons, but debate on such matters is undeveloped.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The Principal, who commenced in post in December 2013, together with governors and senior leaders, have consulted widely to produce a strategic plan that focuses effectively on raising expectations and meeting the aspirations of students, apprentices, employers and the local community. The Principal has carried out a significant and sensible restructuring of senior and middle manager posts to ensure that most managers' core purpose is to improve the quality of teaching and students and apprentices' outcomes.
- Prudent financial management has enabled significant additional resource to be dedicated to further improving teaching, learning and assessment. A strengthened work-based learning team is now in place. The proportion of students and apprentices who achieve their main qualification has risen and it is high. However, weaknesses remain in the teaching of English and mathematics courses, the quality of teaching overall, and in the full implementation of all the requirements of study programmes.
- Governors have a sound understanding of the college's performance, and can identify the key challenges that need to be overcome. They show good awareness of local and regional priorities that may affect curriculum planning. Governors' meetings focus well on reviewing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, senior leaders do not always provide reports that contain sufficient detail on other key aspects of the college's performance. The board's quality monitoring committee does not meet sufficiently frequently, or at the right time of year, to review all aspects of performance in sufficient detail.
- In recognition of the need to involve employers more in the design of study programmes, the Principal has led on strengthening the college's links with industry. The recently-established business commercial team has secured increased demand for apprenticeship provision and established opportunities for more students to carry out work experience as part of their programme. In 2014, two national construction companies, located in the area, have adopted the college as their preferred provider of apprenticeships.
- College leaders have developed links with a wide range of local and regional skills partnerships to improve students' learning within the study programme and create new provision. For example, the college is working with the local Chamber of Commerce, the district council and employers within the 'Lea Valley Food Taskforce' to establish potential careers in agriculture to meet local employers' workforce needs. Negotiations to offer provision in aircraft engineering in partnership with London Stansted Aviation Academy are progressing well. Relationships with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership are less well developed.
- Senior leaders have strengthened the arrangements for the management of staff performance. Appraisals focus appropriately on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. New teachers benefit from dedicated coaching support and improve their teaching and assessment through observations that help to develop their skills.
- The college has a comprehensive and frequent programme of teacher training. However, where teaching is not yet good, managers do not consistently plan sufficient support to rectify the areas requiring improvement. Unannounced observations together with themed 'learning walks', moderation events and performance reviews enable leaders and managers to make accurate judgements about the quality of learning, but it is too early to measure the impact that these processes will have on improving teaching across the college.
- The management of subcontractors and of apprenticeships provision has improved significantly since the last inspection. In response to poor English and mathematics GCSE performance and a decline in functional skills achievement, senior managers have established posts for a new curriculum manager and a coach for learning and teaching to raise standards. However, it is too early to judge whether this will lead to sustained improvement over time.

- The self-assessment report identifies most of the key strengths and areas for improvement, but judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are over-optimistic. The current quality improvement plan is lengthy, lacks clarity and fails to identify the key priorities for managers and teachers. However, senior curriculum leaders have a good grasp of what actions they need to take to improve provision.
- Leaders and managers meet frequently and use a range of indicators to evaluate performance in subject areas against set targets. They monitor progress through rigorous, monthly 'quality panels'. As a result, actions to resolve the majority of key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been successful.
- Staff at all levels, including the college's security personnel, work hard to make the college a welcoming, positive environment. The level of mutual tolerance, respect and inclusiveness throughout the college is very positive. Managers review plans, policies and procedures that promote equality and celebrate diversity each year. They have taken effective action to reduce gaps in achievement between different groups of students. Leaders have recently developed a strategy to provide study programmes targeted at those not in education, employment or training (NEET); it is too early to judge the impact of this strategy.
- The safeguarding of all students and apprentices is good. Leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on the concept of the 'safe learner' through thorough safeguarding arrangements that they review frequently. The single central register that details the status of Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all staff is comprehensive and up-to-date. Managers monitor the register rigorously. All staff have carried out mandatory safeguarding training and understand the range of support that is available to keep all students and apprentices safe. Effective working between safeguarding coordinators, pastoral tutors, teachers and security staff ensure students identified as 'at risk' are sensitively supported to stay in learning and make progress.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Epping Forest College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3			3		3			
Outcomes for learners	3			3		3			
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3			3		3			
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2			2		2			

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and Social Care	2
Early Years and Playwork	2
Engineering	3
Motor vehicle	3
Sport, Leisure and Recreation	2
Visual Arts	2
Foundation mathematics	3

Accounting and Finance	2
Business Management	2

Type of college	General further education college								
Age range of learners	14+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,660								
Principal/CEO	Ms Penny Morgan								
Date of previous inspection	May 2013								
Website address	www.efc.ac.uk								
College 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		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
	396	549	781	410	819	235	1	80	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+		
	81	27	13	128	0		0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
Number of learners aged 14-16	21								
Full-time	3								
Part-time	18								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the college contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pentland Assessment Centres Ltd.▪ Urban Futures London Ltd.▪ Iridium Training Academy Ltd.▪ West London Vocational Training College Ltd.								

Contextual information

Epping Forest College is located in Loughton in Essex, on the fringes of Greater London. The college offers a broad vocational curriculum and a small academic programme. The bulk of full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and following study programmes. Apprenticeship provision is growing and diversifying. Around half of the college's students live reasonably locally; most of the remainder travel to the college from boroughs in East and North-East London. Around a third of the college's students are of minority ethnic heritage, significantly higher than the local population.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Alan Hinchliffe HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the Vice Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, 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 lessons, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the college. 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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