

# Suffolk New College

General further education college



## Inspection dates

10–13 November 2015

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who complete their courses successfully has improved but too much teaching, learning and assessment in study programmes and adult learning provision requires improvement.
- Not enough teachers set sufficiently high expectations of what learners can achieve. They do not routinely plan teaching and assessment that motivate and challenge all their learners, particularly the most able and, as a result, not enough learners make sufficient progress from their starting points.
- Not enough teachers challenge their learners effectively to develop their English and mathematics skills and, as a result, too many learners do not make sufficient progress.
- Too much of teachers' written feedback does not provide sufficient constructive guidance to help younger learners improve their work.
- Governors and senior leaders have been slow to address management weaknesses, and have only recently appointed managers responsible for English, mathematics and improving teaching and learning.
- In their self-assessment, leaders and managers do not take sufficient account of learners' progress and achievements when evaluating teaching, learning and assessment, and have an overoptimistic view of the quality of provision.
- Managers do not set precise enough targets in their improvement plans in order to measure the impact of actions taken on learners' outcomes and secure sustainable improvement.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in apprenticeships provision. Most apprentices develop good technical skills and become valued employees who contribute well in the workplace.
- Managers consult well with learners and use feedback to bring about improvements.
- Most learners benefit from an excellent range of enrichment activities that develop learners' personal and social learning, improve their self-confidence and enhance their work-related skills. The promotion of fundamental British values and the importance of social cohesion is good.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Suffolk New College is based on a single-site, modern campus in Ipswich town centre. The college attracts learners from Ipswich and the surrounding rural areas, which together have a population of around 135,000. Around half of all young people in Ipswich taking GCSE examinations achieve five or more grades at A\* to C, including English and mathematics. This is below the all-schools average for the whole of England by around three percentage points. More people of working age are employed than nationally but unemployment is slightly higher than in England as a whole. A lower proportion of the local population is educated to levels 3 and 4 than in the region and across England. The college offers study programmes and adult learning provision in all areas except land-based subjects, and apprenticeships in eight subject areas.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers set high expectations of what learners can achieve, based on a clear understanding of their individual needs and prior attainment, and plan activities and tasks that motivate and challenge all learners to accelerate their progress.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teachers' written feedback so that learners know precisely what they need to do to raise the standards of their work.
- Improve the teaching and promotion of English and mathematics in all aspects of the college's provision, so that learners and apprentices develop the skills and achieve the qualifications they need to fulfil their career aspirations.
- In order to speed up the rate of improvement, leaders and managers must adopt a more self-critical approach to self-assessment across the college and take greater account of learners' and apprentices' progress and achievements when judging the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers should provide further training to observers of teachers' and assessors' practice so that they are all appropriately skilled and able to make accurate judgements of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers should identify precise targets within their planning in order to be able to measure the impact of improvement actions on learners' and apprentices' progress and quicken the pace of required change.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, governors, the newly appointed principal and senior leaders have strengthened their drive to improve teaching, learning and assessment. They are now well placed to make further improvements and their mission for the college is focused sharply on reshaping the curriculum so that learners are ready for work in the current and emerging employment sectors. The proportion of learners on college-based programmes who complete their qualifications successfully has improved, but the pace of change has been too slow and the quality of provision overall is not yet good enough.
- Governors and senior leaders have been slow to address management weaknesses, with managers responsible for English, mathematics and improving teaching and learning being only recently appointed. Progress in these key areas, while evident, is not yet sufficient.
- In their self-assessment, leaders and managers do not take sufficient account of learners' and apprentices' progress and achievements when evaluating teaching, learning and assessment, and have an overoptimistic view of the quality of provision. Managers do not set precise enough targets in their improvement plans in order to measure the impact of actions taken on learners' experiences and outcomes.
- Managers have strengthened the process for observing teaching and learning, and link this well to staff appraisals. However, observers are not yet sufficiently skilled at evaluating the learning that takes place in lessons and the progress learners make. Consequently, they are often overgenerous in their assessment of teachers' performance.
- Governors and senior leaders have recently completed a thorough review of the college's mission and purpose. They have consulted well with local employers and the local enterprise partnership in order to ensure that the curriculum is developed to meet the needs of the local community and the current and future needs of employers. Implementation of this strategy has only just begun and it is too early to judge its effectiveness.
- In a minority of subjects, including health and social care, automotive engineering and business, managers make excellent use of guidance from employers on the design of the curriculum and to provide learners with work experience. Managers have yet to extend this level of employer involvement to all subjects.
- Managers work closely with local partners in order to improve access to education for young people who are not in education, employment or training. They also have a good partnership arrangement which results in sports learners learning in high-quality facilities.
- Managers consult well with learners on all aspects of their experience at college. They use feedback from learners well to bring about improvements. Managers recognise the need to consult more with staff and employers, and have suitable plans in place to do this.
- Managers have established a well-designed personal and social education curriculum for learners on study programmes, through which they learn about social cohesion, British values and preparation for employment. Learners also participate in a wide range of activities within the college, such as charity events, that raise their awareness of the needs of others.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Since the previous inspection, governors have improved their scrutiny of, and challenge to, senior managers. Senior leaders provide them with detailed reports on all aspects of the college's performance. Governors oversee the self-assessment process well, but need to be more self-critical in their validation of judgements about the college's performance.
  - Governors have improved considerably their links with curriculum areas and use these well to deepen their understanding of learners' experiences and to provide support and challenge to managers.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Managers have effective policies and procedures to ensure that learners are safe. The safeguarding steering group has a very good overview of staff and learner training, staff disclosure and barring checks, and the updating of policies. Managers keep good records of referrals made that relate to safeguarding. Where incidents arise, staff take suitable action to address the issues.

- Managers have taken very effective actions with regard to the 'Prevent' duty, including training for all teachers and dissemination of information to learners. Managers make good use of local partner organisations to provide health and well-being services and guidance to learners, for example in relation to sexual health and personal safety.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are too inconsistent in quality across different subjects and too much study programme and adult learning provision requires improvement. For example, teaching is strong in childcare, health and social care, electrical installation and media, but less effective in other subject areas. Teaching, learning and assessment are good in apprenticeships provision.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers use their specialist vocational skills and knowledge adeptly to support learning. They use a wide range of learning resources and reference materials, including the college's virtual learning environment (VLE), to ensure that learners and apprentices accelerate their learning. Teachers make good use of information and learning technology to enhance learning, for example through the use of mobile telephone technology to develop learners' research and critical analysis skills.
- Too many teachers do not set sufficiently high expectations of what learners can achieve. They do not routinely plan teaching and assessment that motivate and challenge all their learners, particularly the most able, and as a result not enough learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- Not enough teachers tailor tasks and activities to meet the needs of all their learners. These teachers do not provide enough opportunities to ensure that their learners work independently, including outside the classroom or workshop. Consequently, not enough learners take responsibility for their learning and develop their understanding of topics further.
- Leaders and managers have strengthened the processes for monitoring and reviewing learners' progress but not all teachers use these well enough to plan their teaching and assessment to ensure that all learners make good progress and extend their learning. Despite teachers and assessors placing a greater emphasis on target setting since the previous inspection, not enough set sufficiently precise and challenging targets for all their learners and apprentices to improve their work and achieve high standards.
- Teachers' use of assessment is inconsistent and not enough is sufficiently rigorous. Where assessment is effective, teachers use a broad range of approaches that motivate learners to enjoy their learning and understand and measure their individual progress. In a few areas, for example information technology, teachers make good use of the college's VLE to provide pertinent feedback on assessed work. However, teachers' and assessors' written feedback to younger learners and apprentices often lacks specificity and does not contain enough constructive feedback to help them improve.
- Personal tutors, learning support assistants and staff working in the college's learning resource centre provide good pastoral support to learners that helps them overcome personal barriers to learning. Learners with complex needs receive particularly good individual support to help them to achieve.
- The development of learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Not enough teachers promote effectively learners' mathematics skills in vocational subjects. Not enough teachers routinely plan opportunities to develop learners' and apprentices' written English skills, promote their use and understanding of technical vocabulary or correct their spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in written work. Not enough teachers promote apprentices' English and mathematics skills further than the minimum required level of each programme.
- Personal tutors plan a broad range of topics within tutorials that enhance learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, learners on public services courses benefit from guest speakers on the 'Prevent' duty and are tasked with interpreting the importance of social cohesion and role of public services in modern Britain. However, not enough teachers routinely plan or seize opportunities to further learners' understanding of equality and diversity when opportunities arise.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

- Most learners benefit from an excellent range of enrichment activities including branded 'employer engagement weeks'; taking part in skills competitions; and visits by guest speakers from industry that develop learners' personal and social learning, improve their self-confidence and enhance their employability skills. Specific awareness-raising events promote learners' understanding of the dangers of extremism and the importance of fundamental British values effectively.
- In 2014/15, most learners on study programmes developed their work-related skills through purposeful external work experience and by studying for additional qualifications. Leaders have plans in place to continue to improve their employer engagement and ensure that all younger learners benefit from work-related learning and take up work experience pertinent to their career aspirations.
- Most learners and apprentices demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and they are able to articulate how their studies will improve their career opportunities. The large majority of learners and apprentices attend well and on time. Not enough teachers challenge their learners effectively to develop their English and mathematics skills and, as a result, they do not make sufficient progress. A minority of learners' attendance in English and mathematics is too low.
- Most apprentices develop good technical skills, make good progress in their job roles and, as a result, improve their confidence and skills and bolster their future employment opportunities. The majority of learners on vocational courses develop good practical skills. For example, learners studying automotive engineering at level 2 demonstrate good attention to detail in fitting car brakes and ensuring that wheel alignment is up to industry standard in practical assessment tasks.
- Learners and apprentices behave well towards each other and staff. In particular, they exhibit high levels of positive behaviour in shared spaces within the college.
- Learners and apprentices are safe and show a good understanding of safeguarding issues such as internet safety and bullying. They know to whom and how to report their concerns if they do not feel safe. Apprentices have a clear understanding of how health and safety relate to their job roles.
- The large majority of learners use effectively the information, advice and guidance provided by dedicated staff to shape and develop their career plans. A broad range of staff, including personal tutors, youth workers and chaplains, ensure that any learners at risk of dropping out of learning are mostly supported effectively to stay on a relevant course and enjoy their learning.

## **Outcomes for learners** require improvement

- Leaders' data indicate that in 2014/15 the proportion of learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes who completed their programmes successfully increased to that of similar colleges nationally. However, too many younger learners at all levels do not make sufficient progress when compared with their starting points or exceed expected standards because not enough teachers challenge them to extend their knowledge and skills sufficiently.
- The success rates for adults have increased marginally over time but leaders' data indicate that too many left their courses early and the proportion who complete is lower than similar colleges nationally. More adults are staying in learning in the current year than in previous years, but too many make slow progress.
- Leaders' data for 2014/15 indicate that a slightly higher proportion of apprentices complete their programmes successfully compared with others at similar colleges. More apprentices complete within the agreed planned timescale than nationally.
- The contrast in performance of learners in different subject areas is marked: for example, a high proportion of younger learners on study programmes in health and social care succeed compared with the national rate, but those who study travel and tourism fare far worse than those studying in similar colleges.
- Learners with experience of local authority care and those in receipt of bursary payments achieve well.
- Despite leaders' and managers' success in improving the achievement rates of learners with dyslexia, Asperger syndrome and visual impairment, too many learners and apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities do not achieve as well as their peers, and the gap has widened over time.
- The majority of younger learners who study GCSE English and mathematics do not achieve an A\* to C grade. Leaders' data for 2014/15 indicate that younger learners studying functional skills perform higher than nationally at all levels of functional skills except on mathematics level 2 courses. Adults' overall success rates on functional skills courses are lower than in similar colleges in both subjects.

- In 2013/14, the large majority of younger learners and adults on full-time courses who completed their courses progressed to further learning or employment. In particular, a high proportion of learners studying on level 1 courses and learners with high needs progressed to a higher level of learning. Most apprentices continued to be employed at the end of their programme and a good proportion progressed to higher-level qualifications.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### require improvement

- The college provides study programmes in 14 of the 15 subject areas. The largest areas are arts, media and publishing; health, public services and care; and retail and commercial enterprise. Currently, some 2,226 learners are enrolled on 16 to 19 study programmes, all provided directly by the college.
- Teachers in the majority of areas plan imaginative lessons, teach skilfully and use a good range of resources to interest their learners. As a result, learners enjoy their learning, are motivated to excel and make good progress. However, too many teachers in other areas do not plan effectively to meet all their learners' needs. Not enough teachers inspire and challenge all their learners, particularly those studying courses at level 3, to make good progress, work independently and achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers' use of assessment varies in quality and not enough enables all learners to accelerate their learning. In a majority of subjects, regular assessment enables teachers to secure accurately the progress their learners are making, plan subsequent learning tailored to their needs and set challenging targets to extend learners' progress. However, too many teachers do not check and consolidate learners' knowledge and understanding sufficiently before introducing new learning, so that learners' progress is not secure. Teachers' feedback to learners does not always provide sufficient detail and clarity for learners to know how they can improve their standards of work. Too many teachers set targets that are not sufficiently demanding of their learners.
- Leaders and managers have begun to rectify weaknesses in the teaching, learning and assessment of study programmes identified at the previous inspection. For example, leaders and managers now ensure that learners have good access to purposeful work experience which develops their work-related skills and understanding of the demands of employers. Managers and teachers provide learners with a wide range of additional activities and qualifications that broaden their understanding and help them to develop greater confidence and social skills.
- Leaders and managers recognise that the proportion of learners who achieve their learning goals in English and mathematics remains too low. Not enough teachers challenge their learners successfully to make good progress in the development of their mathematics skills. A minority of learners do not attend their mathematics lessons regularly. Too many teachers do not place sufficient importance on improving learners' written English skills, developing their use of industry-specific language or correcting learners' mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Thorough and impartial careers advice and guidance ensure that learners are on the appropriate programme and have a clear understanding of their future career opportunities. Managers ensure that learners, including those with high needs, receive good pastoral support and guidance throughout their study programme. Leaders' data for 2014/15 indicate that more learners stayed in learning than in previous years. The number of learners who progress to further education or training, employment or higher education is high.
- Teachers and personal tutors plan tutorials well to ensure that learners develop high levels of tolerance and respect towards others in the college and the wider community. However, not enough teachers plan or take sufficient opportunities in lessons to promote equality and challenge all learners to consider life in diverse, modern Britain.

### Adult learning programmes

### require improvement

- Adults account for around two fifths of all learners enrolled, and study across a range of subject areas and levels. The quality of teaching and learning is too inconsistent across the subject areas and not enough is good or better.

- Teachers ensure that the majority of learners on access courses at level 3 make good progress, achieve their learning goals and progress to higher education. The majority of teachers who teach discrete adult courses plan activities that make explicit reference to learners' career goals. As a result, the majority of learners are motivated to work productively, improve their self-confidence and secure employment. However, a minority of learners do not develop their wider critical thinking and analysis skills sufficiently.
- Leaders' data for 2014/15 indicate that too many learners continue to drop out of learning. Too many learners, particularly when learning alongside younger learners, do not make sufficient progress from their starting points. Leaders have recently completed a review of the college's curriculum in order to ensure that its adult provision meets the needs of the community and employers. It is too early to assess the impact of this.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers use questioning adeptly to elicit learners' knowledge of topics and plan a broad range of activities to extend their learning. However, not enough teachers routinely plan activities and tasks that take account of the different needs of all their learners, particularly the most able, and, consequently, they do not challenge all learners to extend their learning and make good progress. Too often, teachers allow a minority of learners to dominate group discussions in lessons to the detriment of the learning process for all. As a result, other learners lose interest and fail to make good progress.
- Too many teachers do not inspire and challenge learners enough to make sufficient progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. Not enough teachers promote the value of English and mathematics skills and qualifications in helping learners find sustainable employment.
- Not enough teachers check learners' understanding sufficiently in lessons to ensure that all learners are making good progress. These teachers often introduce new learning without establishing whether all learners understand the topic fully thus far and, as a result, a minority of learners fall behind in their studies and make slow progress.
- The majority of teachers' written assessment feedback identifies learners' strengths and areas for development accurately. Most learners understand how they can improve their work and use assessment criteria well to evaluate their own progress.
- The provision of initial information, advice and guidance by the college's dedicated team is good and ensures that learners are placed on the appropriate course on enrolment at the college. Teachers provide timely and helpful guidance to learners preparing to move on to higher education or seeking employment.

## Apprenticeships

## are good

- Currently, 337 apprentices are enrolled in eight subject areas. The majority follow programmes in business administration, construction, engineering and childcare. Just over half of all apprentices are aged 16 to 18.
- Leaders, managers and staff plan the apprenticeship programme well, demonstrate productive relationships with small to medium-sized employers in the locality, and meet employers' business needs well. Staff work effectively with employers to ensure that apprentices work towards relevant optional units that reflect the needs of the workplace closely.
- Most teachers and assessors provide good on- and off-the-job training, with well-planned lessons and assessment activities, which ensure that the large majority of apprentices' work is of a good standard and demonstrates appropriate links between relevant theory and understanding of the expectations of employers and industry. For example, childcare apprentices apply their learning in safeguarding children to good effect in their jobs. Most apprentices develop good technical skills, improve their self-confidence, work safely and become valued employees who contribute well in the workplace.
- The majority of apprentices complete their apprenticeship successfully and most progress into sustainable employment. The proportion of apprentices who progress to higher-level qualifications, including on to foundation degrees at university, is good.
- The majority of teachers use a good range of activities and tasks to interest apprentices and ensure that most make good gains in knowledge and understanding. Most teachers and assessors promote apprentices' use of the college's VLE resources well and motivate the large majority of them to work independently. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to ensure that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.
- Assessors have high levels of industry knowledge and the majority use questioning techniques skilfully to draw out apprentices' reflection on tasks completed and how they might improve further. Assessors' verbal feedback helps apprentices make good progress.

- Not enough teachers and assessors record specific actions following assessment and at reviews which ensure that apprentices understand fully how they can improve their skills further. Assessors do not ensure that apprentices' progress in English and mathematics always informs reviews sufficiently to enable apprentices to develop these skills further in their job roles. Workplace training is not planned, recorded and reviewed routinely with employers. A minority of apprentices do not access their online reviews of progress regularly.
- Teachers ensure that the large majority of apprentices on English and mathematics functional skills courses develop their skills and achieve their qualifications. However, teachers do not ensure that apprentices develop these skills further than the minimum requirements of their programme in order to make a greater contribution in the workplace.
- Teachers use industry-specific scenarios and activities to promote apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity well. However, not enough assessors challenge apprentices to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the diverse needs of customers and the issues of prejudice and discrimination.



## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	3,800
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mrs Viv Gillespie
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.suffolk.ac.uk">www.suffolk.ac.uk</a>

## 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+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	475	141	681	310	1,070	427	0	39
<b>Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age</b>	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	106	68	79	84	-	-		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of learners aged 14–16</b>								
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Inspire Suffolk</li> <li>■ Lime Skills</li> </ul>							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Matt Vaughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rieks Drijver	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philip Pullen	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Winchcombe	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Linnia Khemdoudi	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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