

Epping Forest College

General further education college

Inspection dates

15–18 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Safeguarding arrangements for learners aged 14 to 16, vulnerable adults and apprentices are inadequate.
- The proportion of learners and apprentices who achieve continues to decline to way below the national rates; few learners make good progress against their starting points.
- Leaders have not rectified the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Teaching, learning and assessment have not been judged at inspection to be good or better for almost a decade.
- Too many teachers and assessors do not plan teaching and assessment that enable learners and apprentices to produce high standards of written work and make good progress.
- Few teachers and assessors use assessment to inspire learning or provide feedback that challenges learners and apprentices to improve their work and excel.
- Few teachers and assessors ensure that learners and apprentices at all levels develop their higher level thinking skills and master and apply theory confidently.
- Attendance is too low and punctuality poor in too many lessons.
- The behaviour of too many learners and apprentices is poor and impacts adversely on the safety and learning of others.
- Leaders do not monitor the progress of learners and apprentices robustly to understand accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
- Leaders do not work effectively with the local enterprise partnership, employers and community organisations to ensure that the range and content of provision are aligned to local and regional priorities.

The provider has the following strengths

- In workshops, the majority of teachers provide good coaching that enables learners of all ages to develop their practical skills well.
- The recently appointed principal understands very well the significant weaknesses of the college's provision and has produced a set of action plans that identify accurately what is needed to bring about rapid improvement.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Epping Forest College is a medium-sized college located in Loughton, West Essex on the outskirts of Greater London. The college recruits learners and apprentices from a wide area including such diverse communities as rural Essex and socially deprived local authority areas in London such as Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Newham, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets. Around two fifths of the college's learners are of minority ethnic heritage, significantly higher than in the local population.
- The large majority of learners are aged 16 to 19 and are enrolled on study programmes. The large majority study vocational qualifications, with a small minority enrolled on A-level courses. Around 200 apprentices follow apprenticeships programmes. The vast majority of adult learners study courses at levels 2 and 3 and the majority are enrolled as full-time learners. The college also provides provision for a small cohort of learners with high needs. Around 40 pupils from local schools and education providers attend the college on a part-time basis. The college provides study programmes in 12 subject areas and apprenticeship training in eight subject areas.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Urgently ensure that all safeguarding arrangements for all groups of learners are effective.
- Improve swiftly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers' and assessors' planning takes fully into account the assessed needs of all learners and apprentices, and motivates and challenges them to work hard at the right level and to excel
 - teachers and assessors use assessment to inform and inspire learning
 - teachers and assessors provide effective feedback that enables learners and apprentices to understand clearly what they need to do to produce high standards of work and make good progress
 - teachers and assessors are trained to teach theory effectively and promote learners' and apprentices' higher level thinking skills
 - recordings of observations of teaching, learning and assessment are verified by appropriate expertise; and that all actions following observations are monitored thoroughly within agreed timescales to resolution.
- Swiftly rectify the low levels of attendance and poor punctuality.
- Urgently improve the standard of learners' and apprentices' behaviour.
- Monitor rigorously the progress of learners and apprentices and ensure that governors, leaders and managers understand accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
- Work effectively with the local enterprise partnership, employers and community organisations to ensure that the range and content of provision are aligned to local and regional priorities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- There has been continual change in the senior leadership team of the college since the previous inspection. Governors have focused on the need to secure stability in the senior leadership team and have worked hard to achieve this. However, leaders have not rectified the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection; learners' outcomes have declined yet further, and teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. The college's provision has been less than good for almost a decade.
- The new principal has established an ambitious vision and mission for staff, learners and apprentices that staff understand clearly. The principal has pinpointed key weaknesses and has, very recently, put into effect a series of appropriate interventions and initiatives to rectify poor outcomes for learners and apprentices. Draft action plans identify accurately the actions required to bring about rapid improvement, but it is too early to see the impact of these on strengthening provision.
- Leaders' prudent financial management continues to ensure that the college is in good financial health. However, leaders have been too slow to put in place sufficient resources to rectify the high turnover of teachers in many subjects. Continual change in staffing has played a key part in the decline of outcomes for learners and apprentices over time. For example, in construction, seven teachers have joined and then left the college since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not make effective use of assessment information and other data to secure improvement. During the inspection, leaders presented a range of different information on the volumes of learners enrolled on the college's study programmes, adult learning and apprenticeship provision. Leaders' self-assessment has a high degree of candour but lacks sufficient focus on the reasons behind identified weaknesses; for example, why learners with experience of local authority care or disadvantaged learners in receipt of bursary payments continue to perform poorly compared with their peers.
- Leaders do not monitor the progress of learners and apprentices sufficiently to understand accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. As a result, they do not challenge managers rigorously to ensure that learners and apprentices are making good progress. Moreover, too many teachers do not document sufficient information to provide an accurate view of learners' and apprentices' learning and achievement.
- Leaders' and managers' poor monitoring of learners and apprentices resulted in them not identifying the decline in progress and achievement in 2015/16 until late in the year. Consequently, it was too late to put actions in place to prevent continued poor performance.
- Leaders are not doing enough to tackle poor teaching, learning and assessment. Managers' reports to leaders and governors on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment lack sufficient focus on weaknesses to enable actions to be put in place to secure improvement in teachers' and assessors' practice.

- The college's observation process requires improvement. A minority of observers' recorded findings of teaching, learning and assessment are over-generous and do not sufficiently focus on the standards of learners' work or the progress they make. Following observations, not enough managers monitor actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment to agreed timescales and through to resolution.
- Leaders' and managers' efforts to develop and train staff to improve their practice have had insufficient impact in raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There has been insufficient sharing of good practice involving teachers from stronger performing subjects such as art and design, or from improving subjects such as sport, with teachers from the many poor-performing subjects.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have appointed a specific lead for English and mathematics teaching, broadened the professional development opportunities for staff and held recruitment campaigns to attract suitable teachers of English and mathematics who have high levels of expertise. However, too many learners fail to improve their skills sufficiently and the college's English and mathematics provision is inadequate.
- Leaders' planning for learners studying on the 'progression' courses is particularly poor because the quality of teaching and the limited range of subjects do not enable most learners to make good progress.
- Leaders do not work effectively with the local enterprise partnership, employers and community organisations to ensure that the range and content of provision are aligned to local and regional priorities.
- The leadership of adult learning provision is inadequate. Leaders and managers have not collaborated sufficiently with the local authority, relevant agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, employers and community organisations to provide clearly defined provision that meets the needs of the local community. Managers do not routinely secure information on the progress adult learners make or their destinations on leaving the college.
- The leadership of apprenticeship provision is inadequate. Leaders and managers have been too slow to respond to the significant weaknesses in provision and the rapid decline in outcomes for apprentices. Their management of apprenticeship provision is planned incoherently and as a result, there is a significantly high staff turnover and poor understanding of apprentices' progress. Leaders and managers have recently devised plans to improve the management of apprenticeship provision, but these are yet to take effect.
- Leaders and managers ensure that a broad range of cross-college initiatives promotes the importance of equality and celebrates diversity. However, they have not done enough to ensure that teachers and staff plan to develop learners' and apprentices' understanding sufficiently in lessons.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is inadequate.

- Leaders fail to provide governors with accurate information on the achievement and progress of learners and apprentices. Consequently, governors are unable to effectively support and challenge the leadership team, and do not respond swiftly to the acute concerns on performance or put in place specific actions to improve outcomes for learners and apprentices.
- Governors do not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and hold leaders to account to improve weak provision.
- Governors have been unable to rectify the continued high turnover of teachers and other staff and secure a stable teaching and support workforce.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Safeguarding processes and procedures do not ensure that learners aged 14 to 16, vulnerable adult learners and apprentices are safe. Leaders have not ensured that appropriate risk assessments are conducted for these groups of learners; as a result, their safety is compromised. For example, leaders have not considered the safety of learners aged 14 to 16 sufficiently, some of whom are vulnerable due to behavioural issues or who speak English as an additional language.
- Learners on study programmes say that they feel safe at the college and know to whom and how to report any concerns. However, during the inspection, the level of aggressive behaviour exhibited by a significant minority of learners during a large-scale incident was of concern and presented a threat to the safety of others. After a significant length of time, which impacted negatively on lessons, leaders dealt with the incident effectively. They have plans in place to increase the capacity of the security team to deal more promptly with any future repeat of such poor behaviour, but actions are yet to be implemented.
- Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive regular training to improve their promotion of British values and awareness of the potential threats of radicalisation. However, too many learners and apprentices are unable to demonstrate sufficient understanding of such values or the dangers of extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers' planning to meet the needs of their learners is inadequate. Too many teachers do not plan teaching, learning and assessment that enable learners and apprentices to make good progress. While information on learners' and apprentices' starting points and support needs is available to staff, it is not used effectively by most teachers in planning learning and developing skills. This results in most teachers teaching to the group as a whole, with the less able finding work too difficult and the most able not challenged sufficiently.

- Teachers do not set high expectations of what learners and apprentices can achieve. For example, not enough teachers of level 3 courses, including access to higher education courses, set work at the appropriate standard to enable learners to produce good standards of work and augment their understanding, knowledge and skills at the right level.
- Teachers do not use questioning techniques well to check and extend learners' and apprentices' understanding. Too often, teachers fail to check learners' understanding of the subject matter being taught.
- Attendance is too low and too many learners on study programmes are late to lessons.
- Teachers' use of assessment is inadequate. Few use assessment to motivate their learners to make swift progress. For example, too few assessment tasks for learners on foundation learning and high-needs provision challenge them to understand topic matter effectively. Managers have plans in place for a series of staff training events to ensure that assignment briefs and assessments at all levels are planned at the appropriate standard.
- Few teachers and assessors provide feedback that challenges learners and apprentices to improve their work and accelerate their progress. Too many teachers and assessors do not identify and correct learners' and apprentices' errors in syntax, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Few teachers ensure that their learners develop their higher level thinking skills and master and apply theory fluently. Their promotion of independent learning both in and outside the classroom is limited and this inhibits learners' and apprentices' capacity to improve their learning and excel.
- The majority of teachers in sport, construction, motor vehicle, music technology, media, accountancy, electrical engineering, plumbing and hair and beauty provide good coaching in practical workshops that enables learners of all ages to develop their practical skills well. These teachers encourage learners to review each other's work constructively to reinforce skills development. For example, learners studying plumbing at level 2 honed their ability to fit pipes to a wash basin quickly and effectively. They improved their understanding of the process by critiquing each other's work sensitively and constructively. The large majority of apprentices develop good practical skills in the workplace.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is inadequate. Few vocational teachers promote the importance of these subjects routinely in lessons. Links between specialist English and mathematics staff and vocational teams are not developed sufficiently. For example, specialist staff place lesson-planning ideas and resources to bolster learning on the college's intranet. However, managers do not check whether vocational staff use this information to improve their integration of these essential skills in vocational teaching. Most teaching of English and mathematics GCSE and functional skills qualifications is of poor quality and not planned sufficiently well to enable learners and apprentices to accelerate their knowledge and skills.

- Teachers ensure that the majority of learners on study programmes know their overall target grades and have a good awareness of the knowledge and skills required for their future progression. However, teachers either do not set short-term targets with them or do not ensure that they have a sufficient understanding of such targets; as a result, too many learners are unclear as to what progress they are making. The use of target-setting to enable apprentices, adult learners and the majority of learners with high needs to make good progress is inadequate.
- Not enough teachers and assessors plan to promote equality or raise awareness of learners' and apprentices' understanding of diversity. As a result, learners and apprentices do not have a good grasp of the importance of such values both in wider British society and the industry in which they aspire to work.
- Teaching, learning and assessment for learners on the 'progression' courses that comprise English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are inadequate. They do not promote the value of such skills to the vocational subjects that learners aspire to study. Teachers do not plan to meet the needs of the wide range of learners' abilities; they teach a 'one-size-fit-all' approach to the whole group of learners, use assessment poorly and place little emphasis on skills development.
- Staff identify learners' additional learning needs swiftly and ensure that timely support is put in place. However, too many learners rely too much on such support; as a result, they do not develop their independent study skills sufficiently. The majority of learners with high needs receive weak additional support because staff provide too much help and do not focus sufficiently on supporting them to develop the necessary skills to work independently.
- The high levels of staff absence and turnover are impacting adversely on learners' and apprentices' achievement and progress. For example, there is too much reliance on the use of temporary staff from external agencies who are often poorly prepared to teach functional skills courses and level 3 access to higher education courses. High levels of staff attrition also result in significant delays in conducting reviews of apprentices' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- Overall attendance during the current year is too low and already below the level it was for the whole of the 2015/16 year. Attendance monitors have recently been recruited and are beginning to make a positive impact. However, attendance is low on construction, electrical engineering and plumbing courses, and particularly low on English and mathematics courses. The attendance of most learners with experience of local authority care is too low.

- The majority of learners exhibit high levels of respect, tolerance and understanding with each other and staff. However, too many learners and apprentices exhibit poor behaviour that ranges from low-level disruption in lessons to aggressive behaviour in the college's shared spaces, corridors and around the vicinity of the building. This lack of respect and self-discipline affects the learning and safety of others. Security staff work sensitively to resolve any incidents of aggressive behaviour well. However, as leaders identify, there are insufficient levels of staff to deal with such behaviour effectively throughout the building each college day.
- Too many learners, including those studying sports, public services, motor vehicle and plumbing courses, are late to lessons and/or extend their mid-lesson breaks, loiter around corridors and do not return to their lessons on time.
- The majority of learners and apprentices improve their practical skills development through creating products or completing job tasks in the workplace. However, not enough teachers make sufficient demands on their learners and apprentices to improve their critical analysis skills and produce written work of a high quality and that is appropriate to their level of study.
- Not enough teachers challenge their learners to both value and develop their English and mathematical skills. Consequently, learners do not make sufficient progress or appreciate the importance of these skills in helping them achieve their career goals.
- Leaders have firm plans in place to ensure that all learners on study programmes benefit from purposeful work experience; a minority have taken up such opportunities since the start of the autumn term. However, teachers pay too little attention to ensuring that the gains learners make from such opportunities are evaluated or contribute to their studies. Managers have not ensured that learners with high needs benefit from supported internships or appropriate work experience and work-related learning.
- The majority of learners broaden their understanding of personal, social and ethical skills through an enrichment programme that includes fund-raising events and visits to museums, galleries and public exhibitions. However, wider enrichment activities are very limited for learners with high needs.
- The involvement by employers in promoting learners' understanding of the world of work is adequate. The majority of learners participate in the college's 'Active College' sports programme that comprises a broad range of sports and activities.
- Leaders have yet to ensure that all learners are safe. Too many vulnerable adult learners, apprentices, and learners aged 14 to 16 referred by local schools and education providers do not know to whom, and how, to report their concerns if they do not feel safe.
- In the current year, leaders have strengthened the provision of careers information, advice and guidance to younger learners and apprentices, but not to adult learners who receive very little. A broad range of student services and careers guidance staff provide pastoral and tutorial guidance regularly to learners on study programmes. The tutorial programme for learners on study programmes features 'track weeks' that focus on providing pertinent information on career options and pathways to learners in each subject throughout the year. However, the tutorial programme is new and it is too early to measure its impact.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- The proportion of learners on study programmes who achieve has continued to decline year on year and is well below that of similar colleges and the national rate. Too many learners on study programmes make insufficient progress, when compared with their starting points, and do not produce high standards of work.
- The proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications has continued to decline over time. Leaders' data for 2015/16 indicates that nearly a quarter of adults did not achieve. A far smaller proportion of adults achieved in 2015/16 than nationally.
- Leaders' data indicates that overall achievement rates for apprentices have plummeted from just over 90% in 2014/15 to just over a half in 2015/16, significantly below the national rate. Fewer apprentices complete their programme within the planned timescale than nationally.
- Published data shows that learners studying on level 3 courses have made less progress compared with their peers with similar attainment backgrounds studying in similar colleges over the past three years. In particular, learners studying ICT, tourism, drama, and art and design courses did not make the progress that their peers on similar courses at similar colleges achieved.
- Leaders acknowledge in their self-assessment the poor performance over time of learners studying on courses at levels 1 and 2. In 2015/16, their data indicates a significant decline in learners' achievement at both levels. For example, too many learners studying health and social care, hair and beauty, construction and electrical engineering did not achieve their qualifications.
- Too many learners do not develop their English and mathematical skills sufficiently. The most recently published data for 2014/15 shows that too many learners studying English and mathematics courses failed to improve their skills and achieve at a higher level of learning than they had previously. For example, a much smaller proportion of learners who had previously attained a grade D at GCSE improved their grades compared with their peers in similar colleges. Leaders' data indicates that around one in eight learners studying English and mathematics GCSE courses achieved A* to C grades in 2015/16. Fewer than half of all learners studying English and mathematics functional skills courses achieved, below the national rates.
- In the current year, not enough learners studying English and mathematics GCSE or functional skills qualifications are making sufficient progress to advance their knowledge and fluency of skills and improve their grades.
- While the majority of learners make good progress in their practical skills development, too many do not develop their higher level thinking skills and deepen their knowledge, understanding and application of theory work sufficiently.
- Leaders' data for 2015/16 indicates that a higher proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved than their peers. Female learners outperformed males. Learners in receipt of free school meals and/or bursary support fared less well than those without. Too many learners with experience of local authority care dropped out of learning, did not achieve and their destinations are unknown; in the current year, not enough are making sufficient progress.

- The large majority of learners on study programmes who left the college in 2015/16 progressed to a higher level of learning or full-time employment. However, too many leavers are unemployed or their destinations are unknown.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- A total of 1,515 learners aged 16 to 19 follow study programmes, the large majority studying vocational courses and a minority enrolled on A-level provision. Just under a half of all learners take courses at level 3. The most popular subject areas are the creative industries, business, construction and sports. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has declined year on year and is way below the national rate.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that all learners have opportunities for meaningful work experience in the current year. However, teachers pay too little attention to ensuring that the knowledge and skills that learners acquire from such opportunities are evaluated or contribute to their studies.
- Teachers fail to ensure that most learners on 'progression' courses develop the skills and qualifications needed to enable them to progress to higher levels of study.
- Leaders have increased the amount of taught time that learners receive for their English and mathematics studies. However, too much teaching of English and mathematics on GCSE and functional skills courses fails to enable learners to grasp fundamental concepts and principles and apply these fluently. Not enough teachers promote the value of English or mathematics effectively in vocational subjects. Consequently, few learners make good progress in developing their English and mathematical skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate because too few teachers plan to meet the different needs of their learners and ensure that all learners are challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Too often, all learners work on the same task or activity regardless of ability and as a result, the most able do not make sufficient progress and those who are less able struggle to keep up.
- Too many teachers do not promote effectively the value of independent working in, and outside, lessons. For example, learners studying motor vehicle at level 2 struggle to work on theory tasks or take notes in lessons. Learners studying level 3 hair and media make-up courses are too dependent on the teacher to provide information and direct them in their practical work.
- Too few teachers challenge learners to develop their higher level thinking skills and produce high-quality written work. Not enough teachers set work for learners, including assignment briefs, at the appropriate standard, particularly on level 3 courses. Teachers do not provide sufficient and appropriate feedback on marked work to help learners improve.
- Too many teachers place emphasis on the completion of tasks and units at the expense of ensuring that learners hone their knowledge and skills and excel. Teachers' monitoring of learners' progress and use of target-setting are limited and as a result, this inhibits the progress that learners make.

- The majority of teachers provide good coaching in practical workshops that facilitate learners to develop good practical skills. They use purposeful work-related learning to reinforce the use of technical terms and promote industry expectations well. For example, in a creative media lesson, learners reviewed and critiqued each other's film work sensitively and skilfully against professional occupational standards in the film industry.
- Too many teachers dominate lessons to the detriment of the learning process. For example, in electrical engineering lessons, during reviews of tests, too many learners stopped listening and became distracted because the teacher fed back answers without checking that they understood the required steps to problem solve successfully.
- Too many teachers reinforce stereotypes and do not ensure that their learners develop a sound understanding of why tolerance and equality are important in understanding the diverse range of customers' needs in their chosen industry.
- Leaders have launched a revised tutorial process that, together with cross-college events, places much more emphasis on ensuring that learners receive an improved level of impartial careers advice and guidance throughout the year. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this.

Adult learning programmes

Inadequate

- Leaders have not ensured that adult learning provision has a clearly defined purpose that is relevant to the needs of local communities and meets the regional priorities for economic growth. There is no identified senior leader with accountability for adult programmes provision or a clear strategy for the future development of adult learning. During the inspection, leaders presented a variety of different data on the volumes of adult learners currently studying at the college.
- Leaders do not work collaboratively with partners such as local employer networks, Jobcentre Plus, employers and community organisations. Leaders do not provide sufficient employability courses for local people, and the on-site community library is not used effectively to promote learning for adults.
- There is no identified leader or manager with responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable adults; as a result, safeguarding arrangements for this group of learners are inadequate.
- Leaders do not pay sufficient attention to the progress and achievement of adults. Leaders and managers do not collect or use accurate information and data on the performance, progress and destinations of adult learners. The proportion of adults who achieve their qualifications has declined sharply and is way below the national rate. Attendance in lessons is too low.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. The majority of teachers do not plan teaching, learning and assessment that meet the needs of learners and enable them to make swift progress. Teachers do not use questioning techniques sufficiently to check and extend learners' understanding. Less confident and lower ability learners are not challenged and supported to make the progress of which they are capable.

- Teachers provide good coaching to ensure that learners achieve good standards of practical work on accountancy, electrical engineering and plumbing courses. In these subjects, learners' practical work meets industry requirements and commercial expectations; learners are able to detail how they complete their practical tasks by using appropriate technical language.
- Target-setting is inadequate. Teachers do not set targets with learners or track their progress routinely. As a consequence, learners do not have a good understanding of their own progress and what they need to do to achieve their goals.
- Teachers in accountancy and mathematics rarely mark their learners' work or provide them with feedback on what actions to take to improve their work. Teachers on the access to nursing course do not ensure that assessment is sufficiently demanding to prepare learners for their next stage of learning. At the time of inspection, learners on this course had yet to have any assignments marked and returned.
- Few teachers enable learners to develop the fluency of their English writing skills or correct learners' errors in their use of syntax, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teachers do not set sufficiently high standards of work for learners studying mathematics, access to nursing and science. As a result, the most able learners struggle to achieve the high grades they need to achieve their career goals, including progressing to higher education.
- Leaders do not ensure that learners receive a good level of impartial careers advice and guidance. For example, few learners studying GCSE and functional skills qualifications are aware of available qualification routes to achieve their career aspirations.

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

- A total of 196 apprentices follow programmes in eight subject areas, of which around six tenths are studying at advanced level and the remainder at intermediate level. One apprentice is training on a higher apprenticeship. A total of 34 apprentices are in training with two subcontractors. Just over four tenths of apprentices are aged 16 to 18.
- Leaders and managers have planned and managed apprenticeship provision poorly. They have not established effective safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable apprentices, including the use of risk assessments, and as a result, compromise the safety of this group of apprentices. Their very recent actions to rectify significant concerns over the quality of provision are yet to improve outcomes for apprentices. Overall achievement rates have declined significantly since the previous inspection.
- Managers have not focused sufficiently on the progress and experiences of apprentices in their subject areas. As a consequence, teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate.
- Managers have failed to monitor apprentices' progress sufficiently. For example, they have only very recently started monitoring effectively the quality and frequency of the reviews of apprentices' progress.
- Leaders and managers have not managed the performance of staff effectively. High staff turnover and attrition have affected the capacity to conduct assessments, reviews and taught off-the-job training routinely.

- Leaders and managers have failed to involve sufficient employers in designing provision; consequently, this has resulted in a range of apprenticeship programmes that do not meet local needs fully.
- Leaders' monitoring of subcontractors requires improvement; their recent actions have focused on ensuring that subcontractors comply with newly introduced contractual documentation at the expense of ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good or better.
- Teachers' and assessors' planning of apprentices' programmes is inadequate. They make insufficient use of information on apprentices' prior learning to plan bespoke teaching, learning and assessment that meet the needs of both apprentices and employers. For example, too many assessors set apprentices the same length of programme irrespective of their starting points.
- Teachers fail to challenge apprentices to develop their understanding beyond the minimum requirements of their qualifications. The large majority of apprentices develop good practical skills in the workplace. However, teachers do not link apprentices' off-the-job learning to their work practice and job responsibilities sufficiently to help apprentices understand how theoretical concepts underpin their practical tasks and skills.
- Reviews of apprentices' progress are inadequate. Too many apprentices, particularly those following electrical engineering, hairdressing and motor vehicle programmes, do not receive sufficient reviews of their progress. Assessors' reviews lack detail and focus on apprentices' progress towards completing qualifications to the detriment of apprentices' development of knowledge and skills. Very few reviews involve employers' feedback or document any employer training an apprentice has received. The focus on equality and diversity in the workplace and on meeting the needs of customers is too superficial.
- The use of target-setting to accelerate apprentices' development is inadequate. Targets set at reviews are often ambiguous and fail to rectify the slow progress of too many apprentices; too many targets are simply repeated from one review to another without clear explanation. The majority of apprentices are not able to articulate their targets clearly.
- Teachers do not challenge apprentices to develop their English, mathematics and ICT functional skills effectively. Teachers do not set high enough expectations for what their apprentices can achieve; as a result, few apprentices take detailed notes in lessons or work independently to further their understanding and skills outside the classroom. Teachers rely too much on dull worksheets that often focus on one-word answers and fail to motivate apprentices to improve their written work. Teachers fail to plan opportunities to develop apprentices' speaking and listening English skills.

Provision for learners with high needs

Inadequate

- The college has 56 learners with high needs. A total of 33 learners are enrolled on discrete foundation learning provision and a further 23 are supported on a wide range of study programmes at all levels. Learners are funded through six different local authorities.

- Managers do not plan provision that focuses sufficiently on developing learners' independence in order to effectively prepare them for their future life and work. They have low expectations of learners and fail to provide them with bespoke, challenging learning programmes. The accreditation used on discrete courses is not fit for purpose and, too often, presents a barrier to learners' progress.
- Staff identify learners' needs accurately at the start of their programmes in order to ensure that support is put in place promptly. However, not enough learning support assistants enable learners to develop their independent study skills sufficiently. Where assistive technologies are provided, most learners do not learn to use these effectively or use them routinely; they over-rely on the learning support assistants to read and scribe.
- Learners make slow progress in developing greater independence. The foundation learning department is resourced with a well-equipped training kitchen, a flat and an accessible garden. However, teachers do not use these routinely to support learners to develop their independent living skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Teachers do not plan teaching, learning and assessment that meet the needs of their learners. Teachers dominate lessons to the detriment of the learning process. Learners become distracted and bored because they spend far too much time listening to teachers and completing worksheets with too much help from learning support assistants. Too often, learners do not fully understand the purpose of these activities.
- Teachers plan lessons that focus on general, activity-based objectives and completing course requirements at the expense of meeting the skills needs of learners. Teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently to build on their existing knowledge and skills. Teachers do not plan learning tasks in small steps that learners can realistically achieve; as a result, learners do not understand what to do and fail to develop their skills.
- Teachers lack the appropriate expertise to develop learners' English and mathematical skills sufficiently. Teachers use spoken and written language that is too complex for the learners to understand. Too often, they speak too quickly so learners are not able to fully absorb information or have enough time to reflect and respond. Staff do not ensure that resources are adapted or simplified well enough to facilitate learning; little use is made of information learning technologies so that learners can practise skills in more informal settings at their own pace.
- Teachers do not identify, assess and record most learners' progress sufficiently. Learning support assistants record activities that learners complete in lessons and note behavioural issues but make few comments on learners' progress. Target-setting is inadequate as staff focus almost entirely on learners' personal skills and not on learners' knowledge and skills development. Teachers use the online progress tracker primarily to monitor and rectify attendance issues and capture accreditation unit completion rather than measure progress against individual starting points.
- Managers have not ensured that learners studying on discrete courses benefit from meaningful work experience. The college's shop has limited opening hours, usually when most other learners are attending lessons and as a result, learners who work at the shop have little opportunity to interact with customers. Learners on supported internship programmes do not yet have work placements. Wider enrichment activities are very limited.

- Learners do not spend enough time working in teams or in small groups, so they are often slow to develop their social skills, friendships and skills for work. The additional support team has recently introduced an increasingly well-attended lunch club, which provides a safe, quiet and secure base for more vulnerable learners to interact with others and improve their communication skills. It is too early to judge the full impact of this initiative.
- Teachers work productively with learning support assistants to ensure that the majority of learners with high needs on study programmes who work towards qualifications make good progress. For example, in motor vehicle, learners develop high levels of confidence to work adeptly with peers in practising newly learned techniques in diagnosing faults and repairing vehicle engines. However, too many teachers do not plan to meet the needs of learners with high needs effectively and as a result, a minority of learners with high needs on study programmes fail to make good progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130677
Type of provider	Further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,976
Principal	Saboochi Famili
Telephone number	0208 5028701
Website	www.efc.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	290	21	491	71	733	67	1	65
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	22	81	62	30	0	1		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0 on full-time provision							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	56							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of the inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	Iridium Training Academy Pentland ALC Ltd							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. 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.

Inspection team

Matt Vaughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harpreet Nagra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paula Heaney	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Fawcus	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Masterson	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Mobbs	Ofsted Inspector
Ken O'Connell	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Gunn	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector

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