Seevic College

General further education college

Inspection dates	6–9 December 2016

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

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Governors and leaders have not tackled effectively the most significant areas for improvement identified at the previous two inspections.

- Too many learners do not achieve the high grades of which they are capable and learners' achievement rates have declined on too many courses.

- Too few apprentices achieve their qualifications, and those who do often take too long to complete.

- Too many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds do not achieve their qualifications.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good and pockets of weak practice persist in several subjects.

- Teachers do not enable learners on study programmes to improve their mathematics skills sufficiently.

- Too many apprentices do not have a sufficiently robust understanding of British values or of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

- Too many learners on study programmes do not benefit from meaningful work-related activities.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners' attendance, punctuality and attitudes to learning are good.

- Most learners who have high needs make good progress and excel.

- The proportion of learners who achieve A* to C grade passes in GCSE English is very high.

- The new senior leadership team has taken decisive and effective action to stem the decline in learners' and apprentices' achievements and has recently implemented a broad range of actions to improve the quality of provision.

Full report

Information about the provider

■ Seevic College is a medium-sized general further education college situated in Benfleet, Essex. It offers study programmes for 16- to 19-year-old learners, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and provision for learners with high needs. Learners attend the college from a diverse and wide-ranging catchment area, including a number of districts with high levels of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of residents with qualifications at level 1 and above is much lower than both the regional and the national averages. Unemployment in the local area is below the national average.

■ Around 2,730 learners and apprentices are enrolled at the college. Most study vocational or academic programmes at level 3; around 350 are studying at level 2, a few are studying at level 4 and the remaining learners study programmes at level 1. The college provides learning in 13 subject areas. The largest areas of provision are creative arts, digital media and business studies. Governors appointed a new principal in May 2016.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

■ Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  – all teachers set challenging and demanding work for all learners and apprentices, paying particular attention to the needs of the most able learners, and that they monitor carefully their progress towards meeting challenging targets
  – teachers' feedback enables all learners and apprentices to know exactly what they need to do to improve, achieve and excel.

■ Improve the achievement rate for apprentices by ensuring that:
  – employers are involved fully in the planning of assessments and reviews of progress in order to maximise the effectiveness of training
  – assessors set apprentices challenging targets for achievement that clearly define how they can improve their work
  – all apprentices who fall behind with their studies have the opportunity to catch up rapidly by increasing the number of assessment visits to the workplace.

■ Improve governors' oversight of the quality of provision and hold leaders to account by scrutinising achievement and progress data thoroughly.

■ Ensure that all teachers motivate learners on study programmes to improve their mathematics skills and to problem-solve confidently.

■ Reinforce apprentices' understanding of British values and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

■ Make sure that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds receive the support they need to overcome their barriers to learning and achieve their qualifications at the same rate as other groups of learners.

■ Ensure that all learners on study programmes have the opportunity to participate in relevant work-related learning that helps them prepare for future employment or training.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement

- Governors and senior leaders have not improved the quality of provision sufficiently since the previous two inspections. Until recently, governors did not request, or receive, sufficiently rigorous reports on the college's educational performance. As a consequence, they were not aware that learners' achievement and progress were not good. Governors did not challenge the senior management team to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly enough.

- Following the appointment of the new principal, rapid improvements have been made; although many of the changes are at an early stage of implementation, improvements to learners' experiences are already evident. The new principal and reformed governing board have embarked on a comprehensive restructure of the management team that is strengthening accountabilities for securing improvement.

- The management of subcontracted apprenticeships provision is weak. Too many apprentices with subcontractors have not completed their programmes in their allocated timescales and too many have left their programme without completing their qualifications. However, newly appointed senior leaders have acted decisively. At the time of the inspection, managers were in the process of withdrawing from all subcontracting arrangements while seeking to ensure that apprentices still on their programmes have the opportunity to complete successfully.

- Leaders have recently implemented a strategy for English and mathematics to enable learners to make more rapid progress in improving their skills. This has led to improvements, particularly in the teaching of discrete mathematics. However, teachers do not develop learners' mathematics skills sufficiently well in other subjects.

- Leaders' self-assessment of the quality of provision mostly identifies accurately the key strengths and weaknesses; plans to tackle the weaknesses are sensible and thorough. However, managers are too optimistic in their judgements about the quality of teaching and the progress that learners make.

- Staff training and performance management focus well on enabling teachers to reflect upon and improve their teaching, particularly in underperforming areas. However, this is yet to have sufficient impact on learners' progress in many areas. Although improvements to teaching, learning and assessment are evident, these are neither sufficiently rapid nor universal. Governors, leaders and managers have only recently begun to use reliable data to evaluate the progress learners make and the performance of different groups. Managers now scrutinise the performance of different teachers, subject areas and groups of learners in order to identify emerging trends and potential declines in performance. Leaders ensure that managers and teachers are accountable for the performance of their subject areas through regular review meetings.

- Leaders have developed good partnership arrangements with employers and other strategic partners such as the local enterprise partnership (LEP) to review the curriculum offer and to provide work experience opportunities for the majority of learners on vocational courses. Leaders have recently reviewed the scope and nature of provision and are increasing the curriculum offer to meet the LEP priorities in sectors such as health, business and creative media.

The governance of the provider

- Governance requires further improvement. Until recently, governors did not provide sufficient and rigorous challenge to senior leaders to ensure that they tackled all areas for improvement thoroughly following the previous two inspections.

- The governing body has recently been restructured and a new chairperson has been appointed. Governors now receive accurate and timely data which they use to hold senior leaders to account. As a result, governors have a much better understanding of the performance of the college and what actions are required to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for learners.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Safeguarding procedures and processes meet current statutory requirements. Learners and apprentices know how to report any concerns. Staff are appropriately trained, and those responsible for safeguarding have good links with external and relevant agencies, which they use well to follow up any causes for concern. Managers investigate referrals thoroughly and track issues through to resolution effectively. Managers ensure that visitors are suitably vetted prior to attending the college by the use of appropriate risk assessment processes.

- Leaders and managers provide regular training and updating for staff and governors to promote the understanding of threats from radicalisation and extremism. However, while apprentices know how to keep themselves safe at work, too many apprentices do not recall or understand the concepts around the threats from extremism and/or radicalisation.

- The security of the campus is good; learners and apprentices feel safe and are safe. The recent introduction of the mandatory wearing of identity badges gives learners a sense of belonging and feeling protected.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement

- Too many teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of their learners and apprentices. As a result, too many learners and apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- In too many lessons, too few learners make rapid progress because, regardless of ability, they work on the same task at the same level. In these weaker lessons, learners often copy from text-based presentations or are too inert and engage infrequently in the learning process. Consequently, the pace of learning is too slow and the most able learners are not challenged sufficiently to extend their knowledge. By contrast, the less able struggle to keep up with the rest of the class. These features are common in several subjects, including functional skills lessons and in too many AS- and A-level subjects.

- In the majority of lessons, learners make at least the progress expected of them. Most teachers know their learners well and plan learning activities that challenge them to improve their knowledge and skills. In these lessons, teachers use a broad range of activities and learners work purposefully, gaining new knowledge, deepening their

understanding and producing good-quality work. For example, in an applied science lesson, learners analysed scientific reports thoroughly and discussed their accurate findings confidently.

- Teachers' and assessors' use of assessment requires improvement. The majority of teachers on vocational courses provide helpful feedback to encourage learners to improve their work. However, learners on A-level courses and apprentices do not have sufficient feedback on the quality of their work and, when feedback is given, it does not routinely include information on how to improve further. In too many lessons, teachers' questions to check understanding are posed to the whole group, with the consequence that only a handful of learners respond.

- On most vocational courses, teachers use their expertise effectively to link theory and knowledge to learners' future employment goals. For example, sports learners effectively apply fitness testing to meet differing client needs, and visual arts learners plan and present attractive window displays for shop owners in a local high street. However, animal care learners have insufficient opportunities to develop the practical animal handling and management skills they will need to be successful in their future careers.

- Most learners, including those with high needs, and apprentices develop their English skills well. The large majority of teachers enable learners to develop their language skills related to the subjects they are studying well. For example, in an A-level politics lesson, learners demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of concepts such as legitimacy and governance. Most teachers promote learners' understanding of the importance of structuring their writing appropriately, correct spelling and grammatical errors routinely and insist on learners deploying relevant terminology in their assignments.

- In contrast to the good development of learners' English skills, the large majority of teachers do not challenge learners to improve their mathematics skills sufficiently. Teachers of GCSE mathematics courses enable current learners to improve their skills well. However, too few teachers of other mathematics courses and vocational subjects enable learners to extend their knowledge and problem-solve confidently.

- Staff do not yet identify learners' personal, social and development needs sufficiently well; nor do they capture the progress learners need to make to overcome barriers to their social development. As a result, too few learners develop their personal and social skills beyond the requirements of the qualifications they are studying. Managers have recently introduced a new 'Passport to Careers' recording tool that monitors effectively the development of learners' personal, social and employability skills. In addition, the tutorial programme is being revised to ensure that learners make better progress in developing these essential skills. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this.

- Most adult learners make insufficient progress in improving their English and mathematics skills in functional skills classes. In these lessons, most learners work on the same task at a pedestrian rate. As a result, too many do not improve their skills and too few achieve their qualifications.

- Staff now identify all learners' and apprentices' additional support needs accurately. As a result, most of those who need additional help with their studies receive pertinent support. Consequently, the large majority of these learners achieve at a similar rate to learners who do not have support needs. However, in 2015/16, teachers were not

informed sufficiently of the support needs of learners in receipt of free school meals, children looked after and care leavers. As a consequence, these learners were not supported effectively and the proportion who achieved their qualifications was much lower than their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare   Good

- Learners and apprentices enjoy their time at college; most are confident, self-assured and hard-working. Attendance and punctuality to all lessons are good. Learners display positive attitudes to learning. Most learners exhibit high standards of behaviour both in lessons and around the college, showing high levels of respect for teachers and other learners. Most learners work collaboratively and respectfully with others when working on assignments or discussing sensitive topics.

- The large majority of learners produce work of a good standard and learners take pride in the work they complete. For example, in art and design, learners carry out extensive research to help formulate their ideas and experiment with new techniques such as texture and composition when producing highly original pieces of art. As a result, learners can articulate their understanding of subject knowledge well. However, in a small minority of courses, such as engineering, learners at level 2 are not encouraged to produce work to the exacting standards required. For example, learners making parts for a reciprocating engine use a basic ruler to check tolerances of the piston instead of a more precise micrometer.

- The majority of learners on vocational programmes participate in work-related learning and/or work experience, and learners enhance their learning and preparation for the world of work or higher education well through visits to employers and trips to universities. However, the impact of work experience and work-related learning is too variable. Too many work placements are not relevant or meaningful and too many learners do not understand why they are expected to complete them.

- The majority of learners studying level 3 programmes gain new work-related skills, such as planning to meet challenging timescales, working in teams in established college companies where they participate in highly effective projects for local and national employers. For example, learners completed research and analysis on what distracts newly qualified drivers and presented it to a national insurance company. However, too many learners do not yet receive the opportunity to participate in these activities.

- Managers ensure that learners have good opportunities to enrich their programme of study with a broad range of interesting activities that extend their understanding of their chosen subject. This includes a number of sporting activities, fundraising and charitable initiatives such as 'Hampers for Homeless'. Learners achieve new skills and complete qualifications to support both personal and career aims, for example first aid for learners on sports programmes and sign language courses for learners in childcare.

- Learners have a good understanding of equality and treat each other with respect and dignity. Learners improve their understanding of diversity through cross-college events and focus groups. For example, learners improve their understanding of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community by attending informative lectures from guest speakers.

- Learners know where to go for help and support, and the large majority of learners have an adequate understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the risks of extremism. Although all apprentices receive training and guidance at induction, teachers and assessors do not check or extend apprentices' understanding of British values such as tolerance, the rule of law and democracy.

Outcomes for learners	**Requires improvement**

- Leaders' data for 2015/16 indicates that the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications varies too much between different subjects and levels. The majority of learners who study A-level and vocational level 3 programmes complete their qualifications and make good progress. For example, the majority of learners studying art and design and applied science achieve high grades. However, too many learners taking AS-level courses, such as economics and law, do not complete their courses and too many do not achieve the grades of which they are capable. The proportion of learners studying level 1 and level 2 programmes who achieve their qualifications has declined over three years and is now below those of other providers nationally.

- The proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes successfully has declined significantly since the previous inspection and too few achieve in the time frame expected. Much of the decline in achievement is for those apprentices studying with subcontractors. Achievement rates for apprentices on programmes provided directly by the college are much higher than those of subcontracted apprentices and are broadly in line with those of other providers nationally.

- The proportion of learners who achieve high grade passes in GCSE English is high and while the proportion who achieve GCSE mathematics at A* to C grades has declined it remains above the low national average. Current learners studying GCSE mathematics qualifications are making good progress. The proportion of learners, of all ages, who achieve their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2 is below that of other providers nationally and has declined since the last inspection.

- Most different groups of learners taking study programmes achieve at a broadly equal rate. However, managers have not been effective in reducing the gaps in achievement for those learners in receipt of free school meals and those with experience of local authority care.

- The majority of current learners and apprentices are making the progress expected of them. However, too many of the most able learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. In contrast, and because of very effective support, learners who have high needs make good progress and most achieve their qualifications. These learners increase their confidence rapidly and produce high standards of work because they are challenged effectively by teachers and support staff.

- Most learners receive effective careers guidance that enables them to progress to higher levels of learning, higher education or work when they complete their courses. Most apprentices retain their employment and the majority progress to the next level of learning. A high proportion of learners enrolled on study programmes progress to higher education, including gaining places to study at prestigious universities.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes   **Requires improvement**

- Around 2,350 learners aged 16 to 18 follow study programmes. Around a third of learners enrol on programmes at level 2 or below. Approximately two thirds study at level 3, half of whom follow a vocational qualification and half AS- and A-level programmes.

- The large majority of learners stay in learning and achieve their qualifications. In 2015/16, the retention of learners studying AS-level courses was too low. As a result, managers have revised the advice and guidance provided at the start of programmes in the current academic year. At the time of inspection, retention, attendance and punctuality of learners on all study programmes were good.

- In 2015/16, too many learners did not benefit from external work placements or work-related learning. In the current year, learners who participate in work-related learning and external placements develop the confidence and skills required for future employment well. For example, the college company 'Live Creative' motivates learners to work in line with industry expectations. However, opportunities for external work placements or participation in work-related learning are not yet sufficient to ensure that all vocational learners have the opportunity to improve their industry-specific skills.

- In the more effective lessons, such as biology and sport, teachers plan work for learners dependent on their differing abilities that enables them to make good progress. Teachers elicit high-level responses from their learners using effective questioning techniques and a pertinent range of activities and tasks. On computing, information and communication technology, and psychology courses, not enough teachers use information about learners' starting points sufficiently well to plan teaching that meets the needs of all their learners. Teachers allow more vocal learners to dominate discussions at the expense of others; consequently, teachers do not ascertain whether all learners are making good progress. Teachers do not check learning and the progress learners make in lessons routinely in order to ensure that learners are making good progress.

- Teachers do not promote independent learning sufficiently well; as a result, too many learners do not make swift progress. Learners work to long-term assignment timescales without sufficient short-term interim support and reviews of progress. Learners do not spend enough time reinforcing their knowledge and understanding outside of lessons.

- Learners without GCSE grade passes A* to C in English and/or mathematics follow relevant courses and the majority make good progress towards achieving a grade C or higher. Current learners make better progress in GCSE mathematics lessons than in GCSE English lessons as teachers' planning to meet individual needs and challenge learners to accelerate their knowledge and skills is more effective.

- Vocational teachers promote learners' English skills within industry contexts effectively. They develop learners' subject-specific vocabulary adeptly. Teachers use questioning techniques skilfully to enable learners to apply definitions and contexts relating to specialist terms accurately. For example, in a health and social care lesson, learners demonstrated their understanding of advocacy within the care sector confidently.

Apprenticeships   Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, there were around 285 apprentices in training; around half were on intermediate level and the remainder on advanced and higher-level programmes. The large majority follow programmes in health and social care and business administration. In 2015/16, too few apprentices achieved their qualifications and too few completed within agreed timescales; leaders are in the process of ending subcontracting arrangements with poorly performing providers.

- Recently appointed managers have assessed accurately the current progress that apprentices are making and have increased significantly the number of assessments that apprentices receive. Managers have taken appropriate actions to ensure that assessors are held to account where apprentices' progress is slow. The majority of current apprentices make at least the progress expected of them because of better monitoring and the frequency of assessment of on-the-job training. The large majority of apprentices who complete their training go on to sustained employment and a significant proportion progress to advanced apprenticeships.

- Employer involvement in the apprenticeship programme is not sufficient. Most employers support apprentices well in the workplace and ensure that they undertake meaningful work to achieve their learning aims, and a few offer opportunities to develop beyond the apprenticeship standards. However, managers have not yet involved employers sufficiently in training and assessment plans to link on- and off-the-job training more effectively. Too few employers are involved in reviews and too few are aware of the progress that apprentices make or need to make. As a result, not enough employers support apprentices to complete their qualifications within agreed planned timescales.

- Assessors do not set precise enough targets or focus on apprentices' progress rigorously enough in reviews. As a result, apprentices are not challenged sufficiently to meet their full potential and achieve their qualification within the expected time frame. Target-setting is perfunctory and does not identify the knowledge and skills development apprentices need to make. Too often, assessors' written feedback on apprentices' assessed work does not provide sufficient detail to help apprentices make better progress or improve the quality of their work.

- Assessors correct apprentices' spelling and grammatical mistakes and provide them with techniques to identify and correct these errors themselves. Apprentices develop their mathematics skills well. Teachers and assessors enable apprentices to improve their English skills effectively. However, not enough apprentices who have already achieved a grade C pass or above in English and mathematics are provided with enough opportunity to improve their skills to a higher level.

- Apprentices enjoy taking part in small-group activities, where they benefit from sharing experiences and learning. The majority of teachers and assessors use questioning techniques well to confirm knowledge and extend understanding. However, in too many lessons, teachers do not challenge the most able apprentices by setting sufficiently challenging learning and assessment activities; as a result, these apprentices do not excel.

- Most apprentices make good progress in the development of practical skills and knowledge through their workplace training. Their attendance at off-the-job training is high, they know how to work safely and they feel safe in their working environments.

Provision for learners with high needs   Good

- The college receives funding from three local authorities for 96 learners who have high needs. The number of high-needs learners on roll has increased significantly over the last three years to meet local demand. Currently, there are 30 learners on a personalised pathway programme, 29 on supported internships and 37 are integrated into study programme provision. Of the 96 high-needs learners on programme, 67 are aged 16 to 18 years old and 29 are aged 19 and over.

- Leaders provide an appropriate range of accredited and non-accredited qualifications for learners with high needs. Arrangements to manage the transition of learners from school to college are effective. Teaching and support staff have high expectations for learners. They make effective use of the information on learners' starting points secured at induction to plan learning programmes that take good account of learners' interests, hobbies, aspirations for the future, and of any travel or mobility difficulties.

- The large majority of learners make good progress relative to their starting points and a small minority make excellent progress. As a result, most learners integrated into study programmes and on personalised pathways achieve their qualifications and nearly all progress when they have completed their course to further or higher education and/or employment. These learners often make better progress than their peers in the same classes.

- Learners develop useful skills through activities designed to meet their needs and interests. For example, in a media design lesson, learners were able to produce adeptly their own video games based on their own ideas. However, teachers do not set a small minority of learners sufficiently challenging work and, as a result, these learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Learning support assistants work well with teachers to provide learners with an appropriate level of support that ensures the large majority of learners excel. Most teachers, but not all, review learners' progress regularly and set demanding targets that enable learners to understand how to accelerate their progress. Teachers' written feedback contains pertinent information that enables learners to improve their work.

- Learners' behaviour is good and managed well by staff. Most learners are considerate, patient and tolerant of one another. For example, in a tutorial session, learners improved their understanding of tolerance and inclusion through analysing effectively the meaning of different religious festivals. However, in a small minority of lessons, a few learners dominate plenary sessions by shouting out answers at the expense of their peers.

- Highly effective partnerships between the college and the local authority, employers and voluntary sector organisations ensure that learners take up a broad range of appropriate work experience, including supported internships. Managers assess the suitability of placements thoroughly to ensure that learners are placed in the right learning environment to maximise their skills development. Where barriers to accessing work experience are identified, managers use funding effectively to enable learners to gain the skills they need to progress. For example, learners can access speech and language therapy to improve their communication skills before taking up roles in customer service.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130681
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,252
Principal/CEO	Daniel Pearson
Telephone number	01268 756111
Website	www.seevic-college.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+
	196	51	342	-	1,814	41	2	2

Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	94	56	35	65	18	17

Number of traineeships	16–19	19+	Total
	0	0	0

Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	96
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	▪ Water Train ▪ Southend United Educational Trust ▪ Escala Training Academy

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy 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

Shane Langthorne, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.