

# Grantham College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

19–22 September 2017

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have improved the standards of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. As a result, most students make good progress.
- Students' achievements have improved and are now good in most subjects.
- Students are confident, well-behaved and respectful of each other; they enjoy learning in a safe and inclusive environment.
- Leaders and managers maintain good partnerships with local and regional employers, and they make sure that the range of courses meets local priorities and skills needs.
- The large majority of students and apprentices achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Students have an excellent awareness of what is meant by British values and most of them apply this awareness in their day-to-day studies.
- Most students progress into further learning or employment.
- Apprentices make good progress from their starting points, gain valuable knowledge and skills that their employers appreciate and most achieve their qualifications by the planned end date.
- Teachers make good use of their industrial experience to prepare well-structured and interesting lessons that motivate students and help them to succeed.
- Too many students on study programmes have work placements that are not linked to their studies or monitored effectively.
- A small minority of teachers do not plan sufficiently challenging work for the most able students and apprentices.
- Teachers' assessments of students' mid-year grades are not consistent or reliable.
- Teachers do not develop students' mathematical skills sufficiently in vocational lessons to prepare them for future work or progression.
- Leaders' and managers' self-assessment report does not accurately reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum areas.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Grantham College is a small general further education college located on a main site in the market town of Grantham. The college serves Grantham and the neighbouring areas of Lincolnshire. It provides 16 to 19 study programmes in a range of vocational subjects, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, approximately 1,500 students and apprentices were at the college.
- Nearly all the schools in Grantham and the surrounding areas have sixth forms. The proportion of pupils in South Kesteven achieving five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is below the national rate. The main areas of employment are manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trades. Most local businesses are small or medium-sized.

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

- Managers should improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further in the small minority of lessons by making sure that teachers plan and teach interesting and challenging lessons to meet the needs and abilities of all students and apprentices, including the most able.
- Managers should monitor students' progress more effectively and make sure that predicted grades reflect more accurately their real progress.
- Teachers should improve the teaching of mathematics within vocational lessons to develop and emphasise the importance of this essential vocational and life skill.
- Managers and teachers should make sure that all students on study programmes benefit from good-quality work placements that are linked to their studies and monitored effectively.
- Leaders and managers should make sure that the self-assessment report reflects more accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum areas.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Governors and leaders have dealt effectively with almost all areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Improvements to the management structure, improvements to teaching, learning and assessment, and the introduction of new quality assurance processes have led to improvements in students' and apprentices' achievements. Staff understand and support the leadership team's priorities and aspirations for the college. Since the previous inspection, more students now complete their qualifications, and achievement rates for apprentices are above national rates.
- Senior leaders have inspired staff to accept new quality improvement processes and focused staff development. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is now good and most students make good progress towards completing their courses.
- Senior managers now allocate specific responsibility to curriculum managers for the quality of lessons. Curriculum managers use information about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, student progress and the quality of student work to assess staff performance and set clear targets for improvement.
- Governors and senior leaders provide a broad range of vocational courses that do not overlap with other providers and that meet the needs of students while reflecting the priorities of the local enterprise partnership. Governors and leaders have recently made the decision to withdraw A-level and health and social care apprenticeship provision. They have invested in alternative qualifications in health and social care and have developed a standards-based apprenticeship in engineering. These changes meet the precise needs of students and employers.
- Managers have recently improved the organisation and quality of apprenticeships. Curriculum leaders are now directly responsible for the quality of apprenticeship provision in their area which has contributed to improvements in apprentices' achievements, which are now good.
- Leaders and managers have developed excellent relationships with local employers and local colleges. These have supported the expansion of the apprenticeship provision and work experience placements for students on study programmes.
- Through prudent financial management, senior leaders and governors are able to invest in the further development of the college and improve the information technology (IT) infrastructure to support teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management of high-needs provision across the college lack cohesion. As a result, there are a number of notable differences in the students' outcomes and in the quality of student experience between those on high-needs courses and those on other mainstream courses.
- Managers do not ensure that teachers predict students' in-year progress grades across subjects and courses accurately. As a result, the indicators of students' progress are unreliable.
- Governors, leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. However, their self-assessment report does not accurately

reflect them. Curriculum area self-assessment grades are overly optimistic.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Governors challenge and hold leaders and managers to account. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college and scrutinise improvement plans to make sure actions are completed. Governors make an important contribution to the development of the college strategy.
- Governors are frequent visitors to the college, taking part in link activities with curriculum managers to further understand students and apprentices. Governors receive reliable information about the senior managers' performance and students' progress which they use effectively throughout the year to monitor targets.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Students are safe and feel safe. They know who to talk to if they have concerns. Managers deal with concerns swiftly and external agencies are used effectively. Students and apprentices understand the importance of complying with safe working practices.
- Staff at all levels and governors have a good understanding of the college's 'Prevent' duty. Staff have been effective in making sure that students and apprentices know how to protect themselves and others against the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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

**Good**

- As a result of improvements made since the previous inspection, teaching, learning and assessment are now good. Most students and apprentices enjoy their learning and achieve their learning goals. Students benefit from imaginative, well-structured and interesting lessons.
- Most teachers and assessors use information about students' and apprentices' previous knowledge and skills very effectively to support them during their courses. Students and apprentices who need additional learning support are identified quickly. Good-quality support is provided so that they are able to achieve their learning goals.
- Teachers and assessors are suitably qualified and have relevant teaching and vocational experience. They use their experience skilfully to motivate students and apprentices to make good progress. Students are very responsive to probing questions and demonstrate their learning through frequent checks of understanding. For example, level 2 motor vehicle students were able to identify hazards and keep their working environment safe.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students. Students make good progress and are enthusiastic about achieving their qualifications. Staff identify students and apprentices who start to fall behind and provide good support to enable them to catch up and progress quicker.
- In vocational lessons, teachers develop students' technical language and emphasise the importance of good English. Students make good progress with their English and in lessons use it confidently and effectively.

- Students display the core values of the college through their mutual respect and tolerance. They often support one another to understand new concepts and terminology in and out of lessons.
- Teachers mark and return students' written work promptly. The large majority of students and apprentices benefit from good-quality feedback from their teachers. This includes advice on spelling and grammatical mistakes, which allows them to reflect on their learning and identify how they can improve further. Most teachers now monitor and record students' academic progress more thoroughly. In a few instances for high-needs students, vocational targets are too generic and assessment is not specific enough.
- Most teachers make good use of the virtual learning environment and information technology (IT) to support learning and assessment activities. This allows students to work independently outside lessons and improve their IT skills.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills. Their progress reviews are thorough and comprehensive. Effective on-the-job training enhances their competence in the job role. However, targets set for apprentices are insufficiently skills-based and focus only on achieving qualifications.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not make sure that all students and apprentices make the progress of which they are capable. Lower-attaining students often do not understand how to complete tasks and they become confused. The most able students do not have sufficiently challenging extension activities to enable them to progress at a more rapid pace.
- Teachers do not develop students' mathematical skills well enough in vocational lessons so that they can improve them to develop essential skills for employment and progression in education.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Students and apprentices demonstrate good attitudes to their work and study. They are punctual to lessons. Attendance for the large majority of students and apprentices has improved and is now high. Staff follow up non-attendance quickly. Attendance for care leavers and those students eligible for free school meals, while slightly lower than the college average, is still high.
- Students' and apprentices' behaviour in and around the college remains good. Relatively few recorded instances of bullying occur and student disciplinary processes are applied when conduct falls below the required level.
- Students and apprentices have an excellent awareness of what is meant by British values and most apply this in their day-to-day studies. At a recent student conference, which included speakers from the local police and council, students attended workshops on law, liberty, respect and democracy. This meant they were able to listen to a wide range of views and improve their knowledge of these topics very effectively.
- An increasing number of students enter national and regional skills-based competitions and several are successful in these. This, along with the improved work-related learning and additional activities, ensures that students and apprentices develop the confidence, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills to prepare them very effectively for

employment.

- Staff reinforce all aspects of personal safety thoroughly at induction and throughout students' and apprentices' training. As a result, students and apprentices know how to keep themselves and others safe. They demonstrate a good awareness of how to remain safe when using social media and the internet. They also have a good understanding of how to avoid the potential dangers of radicalisation from those who hold extremist views.
- Students receive high-quality, impartial careers advice. At induction, careers guidance is given a high profile. It is provided by well-qualified advisers and focuses particularly on progression opportunities. A careers fair, held twice a year, is attended by over 40 employers and makes sure students are supported in their plans for employment.
- The range of work experience options available to students has increased significantly since the previous inspection. Most students now access purposeful, external work experience that relates to their intended career path. For example, staff secured a successful placement at an English shoe company for students wanting to follow a bespoke footwear fashion career. However, while the breadth of, and participation in, work placements are now good, not all students' work placements are linked to their courses or monitored effectively.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have worked effectively to bring about improvements in students' achievements. They have improved the standards of teaching, learning and assessment successfully and, consequently, students' progress.
- The progress that current students are making is good. They are gaining new skills for work, and achievement rates in recent years have improved. For example, achievement for the large majority of students on study programmes has improved steadily and is now higher than in similar colleges nationally. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications by the planned end date has increased and is now high.
- The proportion of students achieving A\* to C grades in English and mathematics is good and higher than the national rate. The large majority of students are gaining valuable qualifications in English and mathematics that they need for work or further education.
- In recent years, the progress that students make compared to their starting points has improved and is now good.
- Adult students' achievements have improved over recent years. Students on GCSE science and access to higher education programmes are particularly successful. Nearly all gain places at their first-choice university.
- The large majority of students who complete a study programme successfully progress to further or higher education, into an apprenticeship or obtain employment.
- Most students with high needs achieve their qualifications and often make better progress than their peers. A very large proportion progress to positive destinations in higher-level further education courses, training or employment. Managers recognise the need to improve the tracking of students' progression to make sure students stay at the places to which they progress.
- College leaders and managers have been successful in reducing achievement gaps

between different groups of students. The achievement of children looked after is higher than for other students. However, progress for disadvantaged students receiving free school meals remains low and requires further improvement.

- Managers' actions to improve achievement and progress are taking longer to have an impact in a small minority of subjects where students still do not make the progress expected of them. This is particularly the case for 16- to 18-year-old students in engineering and care.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Approximately 800 students aged 16 to 18 years are enrolled on study programmes. The majority follow vocational qualifications at level 3. The most popular vocational subjects are art and design, health and social care, and performing arts.
- Managers and teachers have introduced a range of well-considered strategies to improve students' performance. They have high expectations of students. As a result, the large majority of students produce work of a high standard, make good progress and demonstrate good levels of knowledge and skills.
- In most lessons, teachers are very supportive. They use an effective range of methods to check students' progress. For example, the teacher's stimulating questioning techniques in an animal care class meant students were able to give a clear account of different animals' anatomy and physiology.
- Most students benefit from a good range of additional activities, including sport, cultural visits, and visits from external speakers. These enrich their learning experience very effectively. In addition, increasing numbers of students take part in the college's annual European work experience exchange programme. For example, hospitality and catering students who visited Valencia were able to practise front-of-house skills, kitchen preparation and cooking skills while experiencing a different culinary culture.
- Students benefit from a programme of study tailored to their needs and interests, develop a good range of personal, social and work-ready skills and are responsive and respectful.
- Staff provide good careers advice and guidance which help students to make well-informed decisions for their futures. As a result, the large majority of students move to positive destinations that include higher-level courses, apprenticeships and employment.
- Too many vocational teachers do not develop students' mathematical skills well enough in lessons to make sure that they are able to apply new concepts in vocational and everyday circumstances.
- Managers have increased significantly the proportion of students gaining work experience but they do not monitor in sufficient detail the quality of the experience for students and employers.

### Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- Approximately 300 adults are on adult learning courses at the time of the inspection,

mostly on part-time courses. The most popular subjects are access to higher education, English for speakers of other languages, English and mathematics.

- Students benefit from a wide range of courses that help them to develop work skills and knowledge. They achieve basic qualifications, progress to higher-level courses and gain employment. For example, GCSE science is available for mature students who wish to progress into teaching or medical professions.
- Leaders and managers have developed a good partnership with Jobcentre Plus through teaching work-skills courses for unemployed adults in the local area. These courses help adults to develop their academic, personal and social skills so that they can take a more active role in their community.
- Teachers make good use of well-designed high-quality paper-based and electronic resources to support learning. Specialist resources, for example in hairdressing and animal care, allow students to develop good standards of vocational knowledge and skills.
- The large majority of teachers assess learning thoroughly through a range of methods, including questioning, online quizzes and homework tasks. Teachers provide detailed and supportive oral and written feedback on students' classroom and written work. Students know what they are doing correctly and what they need to do to improve their knowledge and skills.
- A small minority of teachers do not always develop adult students' English and mathematical knowledge and skills in vocational lessons. As a result, students do not see the link between their vocational studies and English and mathematics lessons and qualifications.
- Teachers improve students' understanding of diversity through their teaching. For example, students studying literacy share the nature and beauty of their national celebrations with their peers.

## Apprenticeships

**Good**

- The college has around 400 apprentices following eight vocational areas, including engineering, hairdressing, business administration, and health and social care. Apprenticeships are divided evenly between intermediate and advanced levels; the vast majority are following a framework with around 20 apprentices following new standards.
- Apprentices benefit from a wide range of teaching and learning activities in both on- and off-the-job training that build on their existing skills and knowledge. They use their newly acquired technical skills to enhance their competence in the workplace. Their progress reviews are thorough and comprehensive.
- Managers have established effective working relationships with local businesses. Employers are fully involved in the design and planning of apprenticeship programmes. As a result, apprentices add value to employers' businesses and they benefit considerably from their time in the workplace.
- Assessors have current industrial expertise. They make sure that apprentices gain the knowledge and skills they need for work. Apprentices communicate competently, behave professionally and take full advantage of their new knowledge and skills to enhance their career prospects.



- Assessors provide good support for apprentices in the workplace to improve their English and mathematical skills. They make sure apprentices follow the most suitable qualification framework that matches their abilities and future career aims. Where a specific learning need is identified, such as an aspect of English, assessors ensure that the appropriate support is provided.
- Managers have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This has increased the number of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date. The large majority of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship progress to sustainable employment or promotion.

### Provision for learners with high needs

**Good**

- The college currently has 42 students in receipt of high-needs funding; 28 of these are enrolled on discrete programmes of study and 14 are enrolled on vocational courses.
- Students benefit from good-quality teaching alongside effective in-class learning support. Teachers make sure that the vast majority of students make at least good progress throughout their programme of study. Many students make significant gains in their self-confidence and in developing the social skills they need to help them live, travel and work more independently.
- Most teachers have high expectations of what students can do. They plan meaningful, often creative, activities which help extend students' knowledge and understanding. For example, through the teacher's skilful questioning in one session, students were able to debate a range of family relationship scenarios. The subsequent discussion helped students to learn about the importance of remaining impartial and being sympathetic to others.
- Teachers make sure that students' transition to college life is smooth. This helps them to settle quickly. Staff assess accurately the additional help students need at the start of their programme and managers provide any required support promptly. The division of leadership for students with high-needs has limited the progress of some students in higher-level vocational courses. This is now being changed but it is too early to see improvements.
- Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are excellent. Staff set clear expectations for students' conduct, both in and outside of lessons. During a cooking lesson, entry-level students supported an over-excited peer to calm down and quickly refocus on the task in hand.
- Students feel safe. Teachers' highlight the importance of personal safety and social responsibility very skilfully. They carefully integrate themes, including respect, rule of law and democracy, into different learning settings. As a result, students apply these values competently. In one session, students analysed a photograph of a bedroom and who it might belong to before participating in a well-structured group discussion on the importance of not stereotyping or making assumptions.
- In a small minority of cases, particularly in higher-level vocational subjects, teachers set tasks or targets that are too easy and/or in-class learning support is too passive. Consequently, students' progress in lessons is reduced and their development is limited.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130759
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of students	16+
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	3,700
Principal/CEO	Linda Houtby (CEO)/Paul Deane (Principal)
Telephone number	01476 400 200
Website	<a href="http://www.grantham.ac.uk">www.grantham.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	175	140	200	80	399	44	-	9
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	105	110	63	138	-	3		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		3		3			
Number of students aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of students for which the provider receives high-needs funding	42							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant 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 students 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

Kate Hill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Ward	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ian Norris	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Goodwin	Ofsted Inspector
Bob Hamp	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector

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