

Suffolk New College

General further education

Inspection dates

17–20 October 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		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have been very successful in improving teaching and learning. As a result, across all provisions, the large majority of students and apprentices make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Leaders and managers work well with employers and external organisations to strengthen and broaden the curriculum to meet local skills and requirements. This enables them to create better opportunities for students' and apprentices' futures.
- Senior leaders and staff are ambitious for their students and apprentices and set high aspirations. Most students and apprentices progress to further study at a higher level, into higher education or employment.
- Leaders and managers accurately identify the strengths and areas for improvement in their provision and act swiftly on their findings.
- Managers support teachers particularly well so that they continually improve their practice. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment have strengthened since the last inspection and are now good.
- Most teachers use imaginative and well-planned lessons to develop good vocational and work-related skills. As a result, students and apprentices develop greater confidence and independence, which prepares them well for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- The progress of some students is limited by a lack of stretch and challenge.
- The teaching of mathematics is not consistently good, either for adult students or apprentices.
- Apprentices have a limited understanding of how to stay safe from radicalisation and extremism.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Suffolk New College is based in Ipswich town centre. The majority of students aged 16 to 18 are from the local and surrounding rural areas. Around half of all young people following programmes at the college did not achieve five or more high-grade GCSE qualifications, so standards on entry are below the average for the East of England. This reflects the locality, where the proportion of people in the area who are educated to levels 3 and 4 is lower than in the region and across England. The college offers study programmes, adult learning provision and apprenticeships. It also offers specific courses for those who are unaccompanied migrant children who are looked after by the state, those who are vulnerable and those who have not been in education or employment for a substantial time.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should ensure they continue to further improve teaching, learning and assessment across all provision by making sure that:
 - teachers plan more challenging activities, particularly for the most able students and for adult students, so they develop higher-order skills and fulfil their potential
 - apprentices are taught mathematics early in their programmes so that they are supported and make good progress
 - mathematics teaching is of a consistently good quality
 - managers and staff take steps to develop apprentices' understanding of how to stay safe from radicalisation and extremism.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has successfully led a very positive change in the culture across the college so that staff focus their efforts well on the core strategic aim of an 'exceptional student experience'. The leadership team has provided well-targeted staff development training to enable staff to help secure improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for students and apprentices.
- Leaders and managers communicate well with local businesses, the local chamber of commerce and the local authority to raise expectations and develop skills for those living and working in the locality. External partners value highly the progress the principal has made in this regard. For example, leaders and managers work productively with employers to offer the new standards in electro-technical, customer service and team-leading apprenticeships. Managers have also planned carefully, in partnership with the university, to extend these routes through higher-level courses.
- Leaders and managers have effectively strengthened and broadened the curriculum. The new strategic plan rightly focuses on developing courses, training and apprenticeships to provide employers with the skilled workforce they need. Most resources are of high quality, such as the new fabrication and welding centre and a recent development in partnership with awarding bodies to create an assessment centre for apprentices.
- Study programmes are well designed to ensure that students develop skills that match employers' requirements and prepare them well for their next steps. Managers confidently advise employers on options and opportunities within the funding arrangements for the new standards and existing frameworks. Consequently, apprenticeship programmes have increased. Provision for young asylum seekers is successful in enabling these vulnerable learners to develop their English, mathematics, social and vocational skills to prepare them well for life in Britain.
- Leaders and managers support teachers appropriately to improve their skills. Teachers' development and support activities are effective in improving performance in most cases. Those not meeting expectations following support leave the college. Leaders and managers encourage teachers and teams to try out new approaches to learning through projects. For example, teachers of beauty therapy successfully trialled how to use the new virtual learning platform for complex units of study for students.
- Self-assessment across the college and within subject areas is accurate. Leaders and managers identify the main strengths and areas for improvement, including in sub-contracted provision. Leaders and managers ensure that actions to improve performance take place swiftly and then monitor them rigorously. However, the self-assessment of the apprenticeship provision has been slow in enabling staff to focus on priority areas.
- Leaders, managers and staff make good use of a range of information, such as data, to monitor performance and quickly identify where to take action. For example, an analysis of attendance showed that it declined in the final term of study. Consequently, managers reviewed learning programmes to ensure that teams improve the structure and content to motivate students to continue to attend well.
- Leaders and managers recognise that further work is needed to ensure that all students

receive a consistently good experience across all subjects and levels of study, for example on adult level 1 programmes and for older apprentices.

- Senior managers and subject leaders closely monitor the performance of different groups of learners, including those in receipt of a bursary. They ensure that they identify any gaps in achievement and take action to ensure that these students make the progress they should.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are effective.
- Governors hold senior leaders to account effectively and they demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders ensure that governors receive the information on current aspects of performance and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including ensuring that safeguarding arrangements for students and apprentices are rigorous.
- Governors on the academic and standards sub-group link well with vocational subject areas and this enables them to have a deeper understanding of performance and the curriculum, resulting in effective support and challenge.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff, including governors, receive appropriate background suitability checks and the college implements procedures for safer recruitment. All staff receive training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff monitor activity on the college computers to ensure that students and apprentices use them safely.
- Leaders ensure that students and apprentices have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe from harm, particularly in the light of recent terror threats. For example, staff and students successfully took part in a mock 'lockdown' activity to practise their response to an intruder at the college. However, not all apprentices are aware of how to protect themselves from possible threats from radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders and managers respond well to the information they gather on safeguarding to support students and apprentices to stay safe. Managers, working in collaboration with external agencies in response to the increased drug use in town, have put in place classes to heighten students' awareness of the dangers associated with drug taking.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders and managers have successfully ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Teachers and assessors deploy well-planned and interesting activities in lessons to ensure that students and apprentices enjoy their learning and make good progress in class. As a result, most students and apprentices apply their new skills and knowledge adeptly to practical activities and projects they undertake. For example, students following games development at level 3 confidently demonstrated good technical skills in their use of 3D

modelling to import models and textures into specific software applications.

- Teachers and assessors are well qualified in their roles and have good industry and/or specialist knowledge of their subjects. Most managers ensure that their teachers, assessors and learning support assistants enhance their knowledge and skills by accessing additional training which is relevant to their students and apprentices. For example, teachers, assessors and learning support assistants attend courses related to specific learning difficulties and disabilities to develop their craft of teaching.
- Students who require additional support in lessons make good progress in their learning because of well-planned and well-coordinated support from their teachers and learning support assistants. Most teachers and learning support assistants monitor and gather information on students' progress to identify further support and development. As a result, most students who require additional support complete tasks to a good standard and participate well in learning activities.
- Teachers of students who have high needs use assistive technology adeptly to support students with visual and hearing impairment. This develops students' confidence and promotes their independent learning skills well.
- Most learning support assistants provide good levels of challenge with careful guidance and encouragement to students who have high needs. This enables the students to think and respond independently and to complete tasks in class to a good standard. However, in a few instances, teachers do not provide learning support assistants with specific guidance between activities in order to meet the needs of each student effectively.
- Most teachers set students and apprentices suitably challenging tasks. The majority of teachers use their knowledge and information on students' ability to deepen and broaden their understanding. However, not all teachers make use of such information and, as a result, a few students do not develop higher-level thinking skills to help them accelerate their progress.
- Teachers use effective methods to check students' and apprentices' understanding of theoretical concepts. They question students rigorously to ensure that they have understood. Most teachers also ask other students in the class to assess or evaluate the performance and understanding of their peers. The feedback students and apprentices receive regarding their work is mostly helpful and enables them to improve their practical and theoretical competences to a high standard.
- Students and apprentices enhance their English skills by using technical language appropriately in their work. Most teachers seek to develop their students' competences in written and communication skills by providing encouraging feedback on their written work which identifies grammar and spelling errors. However, a few students following adult learning programmes do not receive their feedback in time and therefore often repeat their mistakes.
- The teaching of mathematics is not consistently good. A few teachers do not ensure that students and apprentices have understood the basic principles of mathematical skills before moving on to the next task. As a result, students and apprentices lose confidence and do not make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The vast majority of teachers and assessors have high expectations of their students and apprentices. Most students and apprentices respond to these expectations well by attending their lessons and arriving promptly. In a few instances, where students are not in class on time, teachers challenge them effectively and stress the importance of punctuality in the workplace.
- Students and apprentices receive carefully planned introduction and transition days at the college. During these events, staff arrange well-considered assessments of students' and apprentices' starting points to ensure that their skills, knowledge and prior learning, including, personal, social and employability skills, are taken into account. As a result, almost all students, including those who have high needs, and apprentices are on the right course, closely matched to their future aspirations.
- Staff consult with employer 'ambassadors', who update staff on industry standards and advise students about their expectations and the importance of the skills they acquire at college and through work experience. Consequently, students and apprentices build on their existing skills effectively and develop effective work-related skills in their lessons or at work.
- Students and apprentices are ambitious for their futures. Teachers and staff have high aspirations for their students and apprentices and make certain that they are well informed of their next steps. Most students who have high needs benefit from tailored short-term targets which inform their long-term goals; staff work well with external agencies, such as adult social care, to identify and put in place individualised support to enable students to gain supported employment, independent living skills and take part in volunteering. Most students and apprentices receive high-quality advice and guidance and progress well.
- Students and apprentices take pride in their work. They are motivated, keen to learn and work effectively in team activities. Students and apprentices regularly display their work in the community and to their employers.
- Students and apprentices demonstrate high levels of mutual respect and are tolerant of one another's differences. Through enrichment activities, students develop their understanding exceptionally well of living and working in a modern British society. For example, construction students work with a local charitable organisation to build and repair new facilities, and media students create memorable films and pictures from local archives, called 'dementia suitcases', for elderly dementia patients and young people with mental health problems.
- Students and apprentices report that they feel safe. They know how to stay safe and know who to turn to if they need to report any concerns.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Students across all provision types make good progress to achieve their qualifications. Currently, the large majority of apprentices make strong progress and most are on track to achieve within their planned timescales. More level 3 students make good progress to achieve their target grades than did so in previous years. The large majority of students who have high needs develop good personal and social skills and make good progress in their vocational subjects.

- Employers and clients value highly the work that students do. For example, students in hair and beauty work carefully and skilfully in local hospitals for a community project. As a result, students develop meaningful work-related skills, such as effective communication, empathy with their clients and high standards of client care.
- The large majority of younger and adult students enrolled on study programmes produce high-quality work within their practical tasks. As a result, most take pride in what they achieve and display their work through skills competitions and college enrichment events. Most employers appreciate greatly the contributions apprentices make to their organisations and this results in most apprentices gaining full-time employment and enhanced roles.
- College data indicates that the large majority of younger students achieved their qualifications in 2016/17, above the national average. The proportion of adult learners who achieved their qualifications is around the same rate as other adults nationally and leaders' data indicates a significant increase compared with the previous year's data.
- The proportion of younger students who achieve an A*–C grade in their GCSE English qualifications is above the national rate. However, the number of younger students who achieve A*–C at GCSE mathematics is around the same as younger students nationally. Most adult students who took a qualification in GCSE English and mathematics achieved well; these figures are above national rates.
- Most students aged 16 to 19 achieve their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at level 1 and below. Although students who have high needs gain good skills in English and mathematics, too few achieve their qualifications.
- College data indicates that managers have secured improvements since the last inspection to ensure that groups of students and apprentices achieve their qualifications. There remains some disparity in the achievement of disadvantaged students (students in local authority care and those in receipt of free school meals), but college data indicates that the gap with other students is closing. Most students who have high needs achieve their vocational qualifications at a better rate than students who do not have high needs.
- Managers work well in collaboration with local authority initiatives to reduce the proportion of students at risk of leaving their education and becoming unemployed. A high proportion of students and apprentices progress onto higher level qualifications, gain employment or enter higher education.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Just over half of the total number of students at the college are enrolled on to study programmes: around a fifth study at levels 1 and 3 with just under a third on level 2 programmes. This provision is in 11 subject areas, of which the largest are preparation for life and work, health and care, science and mathematics, and arts, media and publishing.
- Leaders and managers have been successful in ensuring that they meet the principles of the study programmes. Since the previous inspection, they have driven improvements in all aspects of the programme. For example, they have expanded the range of work experience, improved the tracking of students' progress and strengthened links with parents and employers. As a result, most learners make good progress from their starting points, achieve

their qualifications and progress successfully to their next steps in education or employment.

- Teachers are highly ambitious for their students. Most staff provide students with good initial advice and guidance, assess their prior attainment and place students on the right course suited to their goals. Most students are clear about their future plans. For example, students talk confidently about the specialist areas they wish to follow at university and in their careers.
- Teachers have specialist knowledge and experience of their subjects which they successfully use to plan teaching tasks and activities. Where appropriate, students receive additional specialist support. Students are motivated by this and they enjoy their learning, attend regularly and achieve their qualifications. For example, level 2 media and publishing students demonstrate their confidence in video editing and sound skills. They develop these further by adding animations into videos.
- Teachers assess students' learning effectively and provide them with high-quality feedback to help them progress. They use a variety of methods, such as quizzes, discussions and probing questions, effectively to extend students' understanding of theoretical concepts. For example, in hairdressing, a teacher questioned students very effectively on their understanding of scalp health by asking them to write and spell the complex medical terms correctly.
- Students, including those who have high needs, partake in valuable work experience which is well matched to their future ambitions. A substantial number of employers, local community partners and institutions, through links with managers at the college, invest their time and resources in the students at the college. As a result, the range of work experience open to students has expanded. For example, advanced science students collaborate with a local university to work alongside laboratory technicians, and this enables them to gain good practical skills.
- Most students benefit from very good enrichment activities which help them gain current industry-level practical skills, which they use in realistic situations. They build on their work-related skills very effectively through local skills competitions, charity work, and work with schools and community groups. As a result, students develop a broader understanding of social issues in modern Britain.
- Leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on improving students' English and mathematics skills. Specialist teachers give well-focused support to students to enable them to develop their confidence and skills. They review students' progress regularly and rigorously and they agree new targets to help students to improve. Most teachers in vocational subjects strengthen students' skills in the context of their subjects effectively. For example, construction students enjoy using the 'brain builder' workbook with English and mathematics activities related to construction.
- Occasionally, teachers do not use effective methods to enable students to make rapid progress. As a result, not all students make the progress of which they are capable. For example, the most able students become disinterested when the pace of the lesson is slow and learning activities do not challenge them. In a few instances, teachers do not set sufficiently challenging targets to extend students' higher-order skills, such as accurate referencing, synthesising and evaluating information.
- Students behave well and show respect for the views of their peers. They demonstrate fundamental British values, such as tolerance of others from differing backgrounds and

cultures. Students have a good understanding of internet safety and the dangers of extremism and social media.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Approximately 800 adult students are on full-time study programmes and part-time courses. Around two thirds of students follow part-time courses in English, mathematics or English for speakers of other languages. A third are enrolled on full-time study programmes; a quarter follow level 1 programmes and about a quarter are on programmes at levels 2 and 3.
- Leaders and managers work well in collaboration with local organisations to plan learning, and they support students who speak English as an additional language to attend college. Managers have forged good partnerships with Jobcentre Plus to develop relevant courses in response to local employment opportunities. For example, the sector-based academy in welding and fabrication upskills unemployed adults and helps them gain employment.
- Leaders and managers have invested in supporting people with mental health difficulties and those who have previously been disaffected by education. Many students enrol on to courses in partnership with the Prince's Trust to reintegrate, develop in confidence and progress into further study and/or employment. Most of these students have been successful.
- Students generally make good progress in their vocational subjects and in their English and mathematics courses. Teachers deploy a wide range of tasks which are sufficiently demanding and challenge students to make good progress. For students who complete tasks and activities quickly, teachers enhance their skills and development through the use of further work and supported tasks. However, in a few instances, teachers do not set activities to enable students to develop higher-order thinking skills, such as interpreting complex theoretical concepts and sharing their thoughts through meaningful discussions.
- Most teachers provide students with good support and enhance their levels of confidence. Teachers use well-planned teaching and learning and make good use of their knowledge of students' starting points to help them progress. Many students have not been in education or learning for some time, but most attend and are punctual. They develop good practical skills and enhance their English and mathematics skills to enable them to progress into further study, higher education and/or employment. Most adult learners progress to a worthwhile destination.
- Almost all students following access to higher education courses have high aspirations for their futures, and almost all progress into higher education within the health and care sector. Most students develop good independent learning skills and apply their skills at home by making good use of the college's virtual learning platform.
- Most teachers of English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages have a detailed understanding of students' specific skills development needs. They accurately identify these and regularly review them to set targets. Most teachers use this information carefully to plan teaching and learning. Consequently, students learn new knowledge and skills and apply them effectively at home, in the workplace or in the community. However, a few teachers of mathematics do not check that students have understood concepts before moving on to more complex tasks. As a result, a few students lose their confidence, are confused about mathematical concepts and their progress is slow.

- Almost all teachers provide a positive role model and maintain a strong culture of mutual respect within an inclusive learning environment. Students feel safe and know whom to contact should they have concerns.

Apprenticeships

Good

- There are around 350 apprentices with about half following advanced apprenticeship programmes and half following intermediate programmes. There are 16 apprentices enrolled on the new electrical apprenticeship standards. The majority of apprentices follow programmes in motor vehicles, business administration and electrical installation. Nearly two thirds of apprentices are aged 16 to 18, a third aged 19 to 23 and a small proportion of apprentices are over 24 years of age.
- Training for apprentices is good, both at work and in the college. Most apprentices produce work to a high standard. For example, apprentices working in practical trades demonstrate good levels of technical competence in manufacturing, construction and hospitality. Most business administration apprentices apply their sound understanding of efficient working and effective communication successfully in the workplace.
- The vast majority of assessors ensure that their assessments are well planned and rigorous. Assessors deploy a wide range of methods to enable them to measure and report on apprentices' competences. For example, they use effective questioning techniques which explore fully apprentices' understanding of theoretical concepts and how they relate to the practical activities they undertake. As a result, apprentices are clear about the quality of their work and the improvements they need to make.
- Employers work with assessors to review apprentices' progress and they contribute well by identifying areas for improvement. Employers and assessors work together to set precise targets for apprentices and develop well-considered plans for further learning. However, in a very few instances, assessors do not alter the programme to address apprentices' priorities. Consequently, a few apprentices make slow progress in one aspect of their programme.
- Employers value the contributions their apprentices make to their business and ensure that apprentices access a wide range of experiences. For example, a manufacturing employer ensures that apprentices in engineering spend time with engineers who service and repair products in the field. This enables apprentices to gain a good understanding of improvements in the design of products.
- The quality of most apprentices' written work is of a very good standard. For example, apprentices following plumbing programmes produce good-quality accounts of their experiences and evaluations of the work they complete. Most apprentices following business administration programmes provide high-quality written accounts of how they have improved processes and communications within their organisations.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. The majority of apprentices do not make good progress and most of them do not pass their test at their first attempt. A minority of apprentices do not make good progress in developing the mathematics skills required for their apprenticeship.
- Most apprentices demonstrate high-quality professional standards in their behaviour, both at work and in the college. Most apprentices feel safe. Assessors routinely check apprentices' understanding of concerns around their safety. However, apprentices' understanding of how

to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism is insufficient.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130820
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+/16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,742
Principal/CEO	Viv Gillespie
Telephone number	01473 382200
Website	www.suffolk.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	588	209	743	370	787	329	-	30
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	124	39	73	97	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	14							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	170							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Inspire Suffolk Needham Market Football Club The Skills Network							

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

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