

Luton Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates

28 November–1 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors, senior leaders and staff understand the local community well. They use this information to develop a safe, supportive and harmonious working environment and an ambitious culture.
- A high proportion of students progress to higher education.
- Leaders and managers analyse learners' qualification outcomes very thoroughly. When they identify declining trends in achievement they take swift action to make improvements.
- The large majority of students complete their courses and achieve their qualifications. Learners who have special educational needs (SEN), and those in receipt of bursary funds, also achieve well.
- Managers have been successful in raising students' achievements in English and mathematics qualifications to a good standard.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective in enabling the large majority of students to develop their skills and knowledge and to make good progress.
- Science students benefit from inspirational support from recent graduates of the college. This innovative development helps science students to improve.
- Students' attendance is very high. They arrive promptly and ready to learn. Students respond quickly to instructions and participate fully in learning activities.
- Too few learners develop sufficiently the skills for the jobs and careers to which they aspire.
- Progress mentors do not have the information that they require to provide the swiftest possible support to enable more students to achieve their best.
- Too many students do not improve their mathematical skills.
- Students' achievement on A-level science and mathematics subjects is too low and too few students achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge the most able students to make the progress of which they are capable.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Luton Sixth Form College is located in a largely residential area two miles north of the centre of Luton. Luton is one of the UK's most diverse towns, with over 140 nationalities and 100 languages spoken. The student population has a higher proportion of minority ethnic groups than the local population. At the time of the inspection, 2,828 students were studying at the college, with the vast majority aged 16 to 18 years and studying advanced-level courses. A quarter of the students resit their qualifications in English and mathematics.
- The population of Luton is about 200,000. Luton has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Almost half of the students live in the most deprived districts. Luton's unemployment rate is above the national figure. The proportion of the population with high-level qualifications is lower than the national average. At key stage 4, pupils' average attainment 8 score is below the national figure, and the percentage of pupils who achieve grade 4, or higher, in mathematics and English GCSE is below the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Enable more students to achieve their best by leaders ensuring that:
 - all teaching staff record student assessments regularly, in a way which enables progress mentors to identify students who are underperforming
 - students on science and mathematics A-level courses achieve as well as they are capable.
- Improve the development of students' skills for employment by:
 - ensuring that each student has an individual plan for developing the skills that they will need for their chosen career path or vocational area of interest
 - increasing significantly the proportion of students who undertake a high-quality work experience placement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing relevant training and development for teachers to support them in designing activities to extend the learning of the most able students
 - sharing more widely the good practice of teachers who successfully provide students with more challenging activities
 - ensuring that teachers have the plans, skills and confidence to support the development of students' mathematical skills in all courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Overall, senior leaders have maintained the good achievements identified in the previous inspection in 2008. Most teaching, learning and assessment continue to be good. However, too many students studying A-level science courses do not make good progress and achieve higher grades.
- Supported by a strong governing body, senior leaders have responded well to the changing needs of their local community and students. However, senior leaders have been slow to develop the curriculum for study programmes and the increasing need for students to gain skills that prepare them for employment. Too few students gain work-related skills and sufficient insight into the jobs and careers to which they aspire. Senior leaders have only recently improved their efforts to integrate high-quality work-related learning into all programmes.
- Senior leaders contribute to, and often lead, partnerships and initiatives aimed at improving opportunities for learners aged 16 to 19 in Luton; for example, establishing partnerships to improve collaboration between schools and colleges. As a result, information, advice and guidance for learners are effective in making sure that students enrol on the best course for them. Leaders ensure that schools provide information about the support needs of vulnerable students in order to make the transition process much smoother for students. Leaders and managers collaborate on curriculum developments. For example, students can combine A-level mathematics at Luton Sixth Form College with engineering at a local college. Consequently, students gain the benefit of relevant teaching expertise and high-quality facilities.
- Senior leaders and staff understand students' aspirations and the challenges many of them face and use this information to provide a safe, inclusive community in the college. A wide and effective range of services supports students to progress to higher education and employment. For example, senior leaders employ previous graduates of the college as mentors for students. Counsellors and personal advisers support students with personal and social issues. As a result, the proportion of students who stay in learning is high.
- Leaders, managers and teachers successfully raise the aspirations of students, including those from some disadvantaged communities in Luton. As a result, nearly three quarters of students at level 3 progress to higher education, including to study medicine. The expansion of the range of level 2 courses has successfully helped an increasing number of students who have not succeeded at school to progress to study at level 3.
- Leaders use information on students' progression to higher education to develop contacts with universities that are popular with their students and to prepare students well for the transition.
- Managers review the previous year's performance of staff against a range of targets and indicators such as students' views of their course, outcomes and teachers' classroom practice. Learning development leaders provide relevant training or support for teachers who need to improve. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Leaders and managers analyse students' results very thoroughly to identify trends and gaps in achievement. Their actions bring about improvements. For example, having identified that too many A-level mathematics students were making slow progress, managers have taken actions to provide swift and targeted support. As a result, the progress students made at AS-level mathematics in 2017 was excellent. However, although management actions have reduced the gap in achievement between male and female achievement at A level, male performance needs to improve further.
- Recently, college leaders have introduced curriculum area reviews. They effectively evaluate the performance of teams and identify what they need to improve. While there have been improvements in some curriculum teams, this process has not yet improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for students on all courses.
- Managers do not ensure that teachers are consistent in their recording of students' assessments. This means that progress mentors do not have a complete set of timely information about students' progress, and so cannot support students to achieve their potential.
- Managers have been successful at increasing the proportion of students who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. They have upskilled the managers of these subjects through specific training on curriculum leadership. However, they have not communicated effectively their expectations about the promotion of English and mathematics to teachers in other subjects. As a result, teachers do not consistently apply initiatives to promote these skills, particularly mathematics, across all courses.
- Leaders and managers communicate effectively a very clear set of values, and ensure that students from the very wide range of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds mix well and are respectful of each other.

The governance of the provider

- The board includes representatives from community groups, local schools and a further education college. Governors are keen that, at the highest level, the college is acting in the best interests of local learners aged 16 to 18.
- Governors understand the college's strengths and weaknesses through regular visits to lessons, discussions with students and staff and informative papers provided by senior leaders. They challenge senior leaders well during board meetings and ask the questions they need to make informed decisions. Their careful stewardship of the college's finances has ensured that physical resources and staffing are good. Since the previous inspection, they have overseen a complete redevelopment of the college campus. New buildings are spacious and contribute to the sense of community that is evident within the college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have a very good knowledge of local risks to students. Senior leaders ensure that there is effective security in place, as well as a culture of respect and good behaviour. Students and staff understand this well.
- Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding including refresher training and regular briefings. Students know to whom they should report concerns. Managers record thoroughly safeguarding incidents and take appropriate action. Staff members work well

with local organisations involved in safeguarding students. Luton is a 'Prevent' priority area and staff take appropriate steps to help students to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism. They work effectively with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and a multi-agency panel dealing with any arising safeguarding concerns. Learners say they feel safe and staff take appropriate action to keep learners safe.

- Managers monitor health and safety incidents closely. They use assiduously the information from these records to ensure that students are safe. For example, managers reversed an increase in sports injuries due to improvements in the training on safe use of equipment provided to students.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All students at the college follow full-time 16 to 19 study programmes. Just over half study courses at AS and A level, over a third follow advanced vocational courses, and the remainder are enrolled on level 2 courses. The largest A-level subjects are English, mathematics, psychology, sociology and biology. The largest vocational subjects are business, health and social care, information technology, and applied law. A quarter of the students take courses in English and mathematics at level 2 or level 1, as part of their study programme.
- Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge, expertise and industry experience. They provide clear explanations and helpful demonstrations for students. Together with their good use of technology and skilfully crafted workbooks, teachers support effectively their students to make good progress. For example, in economics, teachers develop students' understanding of different types of market behaviour well. Teachers challenge adeptly students to explain real scenarios by using the relevant theoretical graphs. This improves the depth of students' understanding.
- Teachers develop well-designed and interesting activities, which enable students to develop their skills and knowledge well. For example, in advanced-level English, psychology, history and law, students deepen their knowledge and understanding of complex concepts, extend their thinking and work to high standards. For example, in a history lesson, students were encouraged to answer the more challenging questions, and to interpret the more difficult passages of text in relation to the failure of the government during the Cromwell period. In English, students participated in a question and answer session on the development of the English language over time. The lessons took place in the corridor to illustrate the passage of time, and teachers integrated the wall displays into the learning. Students enjoyed the activity and understood clearly the scale of changes in language over time.
- Through effective assessment at the beginning of the course, teachers identify effectively students' individual support needs. Students, including those with high needs, benefit from highly effective, tailored support that supports their learning well. Additional support, particularly in mathematics and English lessons at level 2 helps individual students to make good progress. Support for students with Asperger's syndrome and autism is good, and these students make progress at least as well as their peers.
- Teachers encourage successfully students to develop as independent learners, preparing them well for higher education. As a result, students are making good progress and make good use of learning centres and support provided by the staff. Students, particularly

those studying geography and information technology, make effective use of the online resources, to catch up on work, to reinforce their learning, and to prepare themselves for future learning sessions. Science students benefit from working both independently and collaboratively, in a recently established sport and science achievement centre. Students access helpful individual support and coaching, provided by former successful graduates.

- Teachers set regular written work, and their assessment is accurate and timely, providing students with a clear indication of progress. When students are at risk of falling behind, teachers are quick to offer additional support sessions, which students attend well. This includes workshops, revision classes and drop-in sessions throughout the week, and after college. The large majority of students benefit from helpful verbal and written feedback on the quality of their assessed work and are clear how they can secure further improvements.
- Teachers develop students' use of correct terminology and technical language very well. Students develop their spoken English skills well.
- The majority of teachers use effective approaches to check and develop students' understanding in lessons. They use questioning techniques to challenge students to think more deeply or understand different points of view. However, a minority of teachers do not check that all students have grasped fundamental concepts and principles before they move on to further activities or new topics. As a result, these teachers do not have a clear insight into what students have understood, what they can do, and what they still need to learn. Managers and teachers do not ensure that all students are recording their learning effectively.
- Too few teachers provide opportunities for the most able students to make the progress of which they are capable. In a small minority of cases, all students work at the same pace and level, with examples of students waiting while other students catch up, so that the most able students do not receive sufficient challenge.
- Apart from in the teaching of mathematics qualifications, teachers do not develop students' mathematical skills consistently well. Teachers do not exhibit the skills or confidence to check or develop further students' mathematical understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students are confident and self-assured, and understand how their studies will help them progress to further study or employment. Students are keen to learn and concentrate well on the tasks set.
- Students' attendance at lessons is very high. Students are aware of the importance of attending all lessons and of being punctual. Managers have recently introduced dedicated progress mentors for first-year students. This has led to an improvement in tutorial attendance.
- Students behave well and are friendly and helpful to each other and to visitors. In lessons, they respect the instructions given by the teacher and carry out learning tasks diligently.
- The proportion of students achieving their main vocational units is high, and a small proportion of students achieve additional qualifications. For example, students on the sport course complete the first aid at work unit. This helps them to prepare for work in

industry.

- Students have a good understanding of the importance of improving their English skills. The proportion of students achieving their English qualifications is high. For many, this improves their employability and last year the large majority of level 2 students were able to progress to a higher level of study.
- In the large majority of instances, students produce work which meets or exceeds that expected for the level of their course. The large majority of students can explain how they have developed and what they have learned. For example, A-level sociology students discuss in depth the various theoretical perspectives of crime and deviance when considering the relationship between deviance and the notions of 'normality'. Students are therefore able to demonstrate the more challenging skills of evaluation and synthesis, which are required for higher grades.
- Students develop their practical skills well, for example in art and design, performing arts, and music. In Year 1 art and design, students develop software skills, which enable them to manipulate images in new and creative ways. Students studying A-level music develop their practical skills to a high standard in lessons, through practice, and through the additional instrumental lessons provided by the college.
- Enrichment is an important part of student life and ensures that students develop a broad range of personal and social skills. For example, students benefit from taking part fully in the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme, the debating society and the economics club.
- Students have a wide variety of opportunities for physical activity. For example, there are basketball, table tennis, badminton, netball, handball and cricket activities. The majority of students, not just those that take sport as one of their courses, take part in the lunchtime sports and games and make good use of the fitness gym. The majority of learners know how to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Students benefit from effective and easily accessible careers guidance. They receive advice and guidance through drop-in sessions or detailed interviews with careers advisers. The progress mentors provide effective support for students when planning their progression, particularly for higher education. Students use this information well to develop ambitious but realistic plans for their future careers.
- Support for students is effective. Student support managers are aware of the needs of their students. They have increased the specialist support for students with mental health issues. Managers provide support for all young people who are in care, are young carers, or living independently. As a result, the majority of these students progress to university.
- Students from different communities work well with each other. The student council is active and takes a leading role in the 'celebrating diversity' event, which includes student performances from different ethnic communities.
- College managers support different faith groups well. Students of all faiths use the faith room. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender group meets regularly, and a member of staff provides good support.
- Students have a good understanding of British values. They can talk confidently and in depth about how the values of democracy, respect and the rule of law relate to their daily lives. Most students understand how they can protect themselves against the risks of radicalisation, extremism and grooming. As part of a comprehensive induction,

programme students complete a training course on how to use the internet safely.

- Students feel safe in college and appreciate how college managers assure their safety and reduce the risk of harm.
- Too few students have a detailed understanding, or practical experience, of the skills they need to develop in order to work in their chosen career or vocational area.
- In a minority of subjects, students do not take sufficient care in organising their written work and other learning materials. These students do not have a sound basis for revision and the poorer practice is in subjects where achievement is weaker, for example on mathematics and science A-level courses.

Outcomes for students

Good

- The large majority of students make good progress from their individual starting points. A-level students make particularly strong progress in English language, geography, history, law and sociology. Students on advanced-level vocational courses progress very well in applied law, creative media and performing arts. College-based assessments show that current second-year students have made good progress since the end of the first year. However, in the summer of 2017, students studying biology, chemistry and physics A levels did not achieve the grades of which they are capable, given their previous GCSE results.
- The very large majority of students complete and pass their qualifications. The proportion of students who achieve high grades has improved for each of the last three years. Students who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those in receipt of bursary achieve as well as their peers. However, male students do not achieve or make good progress compared to females at A level. Managers have reduced the gap, but it remains an area for further improvement. Although improving, the proportion of students who achieve their level 2 vocational qualification is low. There are a small number of students in care; the proportion who achieve their qualifications is lower than their peers.
- A high proportion of students enrolled on English and mathematics GCSE courses improve their skills, and a high proportion achieve high grades. A very high proportion of students studying English functional skills courses complete and achieve their qualification. Students develop their English skills well on their study programmes. Students develop their oral skills and the ability to write to different audiences, and they use technical vocabulary well.
- A very high proportion of students progress to higher education. Managers have designed an effective programme to support students who aspire to enter specialist professions such as medicine. A much smaller proportion of students progress to employment with training and apprenticeships. Managers track student destinations well and only a very small proportion of students do not progress to education or employment.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130600
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,721
Principal/CEO	Mr Chris Nicholls
Telephone number	01582 877500
Website	www.lutonsfc.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)	-	-	277	-	2,528	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	7							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal students and quality, 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 and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and parents; 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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