

# Epping Forest College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

20–23 February 2018

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Despite improvements since the last inspection, leaders' and managers' actions to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet resulted in good teaching and good outcomes for learners.
- Leaders have been too slow to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of local adults and communities, including the unemployed.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not challenge learners to work hard and make rapid progress.
- Teachers of English and mathematics courses do not enable study programme learners to improve their skills.
- Too many learners do not attend their lessons frequently or on time.
- Too many learners with high needs do not improve their work-related skills through supported internships or relevant work experience.
- Management of apprenticeships and subcontracted provision is inadequate.

### The provider has the following strengths

- As a result of improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, more learners achieve their qualifications than previously.
- Teachers' frequent and thorough assessments of learners' practical work enable the majority of learners to improve their practice.
- Behaviour has improved. Managers' actions to improve learners' behaviour ensure that learners are now respectful to one another and to their teachers.
- Most learners improve their industry-specific knowledge and skills through work placements and work-related opportunities.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Epping Forest College is a medium-sized college located in Loughton, West Essex, on the outskirts of Greater London. The college recruits learners and apprentices from a wide geographical area, including rural Essex and the London boroughs of Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. Around a third of the college's learners are of minority ethnic heritage, higher than in the local population.
- The large majority of learners are aged 16 to 19 years and enrolled on study programmes. A high proportion study vocational qualifications, with a small minority enrolled on A-level courses. Around 125 apprentices follow apprenticeship programmes. The vast majority of adult learners study part-time courses at levels 2 and 3. The college provides study programmes in 10 subject areas and apprenticeship training in business, electrical and plumbing. An assessment by the Further Education Commissioner resulted in the college being placed in administered status in March 2017. In December 2017, the Education and Skills Funding Agency issued the college with a 'notice to improve' as a result of inadequate financial health.

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

- Urgently improve the management of apprenticeships programmes to ensure that all apprenticeship provision meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers raise their expectations of what learners can achieve
  - teachers set challenging work and use assessment methods which inspire all learners and meet their differing needs
  - teachers receive appropriate training to ensure that their teaching enables learners to excel.
- Improve the quality of English and mathematics provision.
- Urgently ensure that all learners attend their lessons regularly and on time.
- Ensure that learners with high needs have the opportunity to enhance their employability and independence through meaningful work placements.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders' management of subcontracting arrangements for apprenticeships provision is not effective. Leaders have not ensured that the subcontractor provision, Pentland ALC Ltd, meets the principles and requirements of apprenticeships. Leaders do not check effectively the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or monitor robustly apprentices' progress.
- Leaders do not ensure that learners attend their lessons frequently or on time, particularly on English and mathematics courses. However, more learners remain in learning than in previous years.
- There is too much variability in teachers' practice across the subjects and levels, and too many teachers do not challenge their learners to excel.
- Leaders and managers now use effective performance management processes to improve teaching. Actions to address underperformance are increasingly robust and timely. Managers use accurate data and information on learners' progress to now ensure that more learners make better progress than previously. For example, timely interventions are in place to enable learners with experience of local authority care to attend regularly and make good progress.
- Challenging key performance indicators are set and reviewed regularly by leaders and managers. However, in 2016/17 not all targets were achieved; for example, learners' attendance on study programmes. At the time of inspection, the college's financial position and learners' attendance remain key areas of concern.
- Leaders and managers face significant challenges in developing the curriculum, due to the current financial position. The current adult curriculum is underdeveloped and does not provide sufficient opportunities to train local unemployed people with new skills for employment.
- Leaders ensure that the self-assessment process is mostly accurate; however, leaders failed to identify the poor performance of apprenticeships provision.
- Leaders and managers do not set and make sufficient use of measurable performance indicators to aid quality improvement. Many report updates are a description of what managers have done, rather than an evaluation of how well completed actions have improved the provision's quality.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have restructured the management team with the purpose to provide a high-quality learner experience for all learners. Leaders now communicate effectively their vision and high expectations. As a consequence, more learners are making good progress and achieving their qualifications than previously. Additionally, the achievement gap between male and female learners is reducing.
- Teachers effectively promote respectful relationships between learners in the colleges shared spaces and lessons. Learners value the diversity of the college community and are able to explain well the importance of British values.

## The governance of the provider

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now effective. Governors receive appropriate training and guidance through new clerking arrangements, which have enabled them to provide appropriate challenge to leaders and managers to improve the majority of the provision further. Governors know most of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. However, governors do not monitor the performance of the subcontracted apprenticeships provision.
- Many members of governing body are relatively new to their roles but understand most of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Governors conduct learning walks alongside college managers to ensure they have a better understanding of teaching, learning and assessment. They acknowledge the challenging financial position of the college and are working closely with the funding body to secure the college's future.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders prioritise a learning environment in which learners feel safe and protected. Learners and staff have a clear understanding of how to raise any welfare or safety concerns. Learners are confident that staff will follow these up quickly and appropriately. Productive working partnerships with local authorities and neighbouring police forces improve safeguarding arrangements for learners.
- Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously, and almost all have completed safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. However, leaders have not ensured that learners and apprentices have a sound understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Managers hold regular meetings to review safeguarding referrals and to ensure that any arising concerns are resolved fully to timescale.
- All staff receive thorough checks prior to commencing their work with young people and vulnerable adults. Leaders and managers ensure that learners who use online technology know how to stay safe when using the internet. Safeguarding arrangements for learners aged 14 to 16 years attending college through partnership arrangements are effective. Managers at the apprenticeships subcontracted provision carry out comprehensive risk assessments to ensure apprentices' safety in their workplaces.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not good enough across the college to ensure that all students are making the progress of which they are capable. In too many lessons, teachers do not set work that is difficult enough, or which extends learners' and apprentices' higher level thinking skills.
- Too few teachers use information on learners' starting points to provide teaching that meets the needs of learners. Teachers have profiles and information on learners' English and mathematics skills prior to the courses commencing. However, they do not routinely use this information to provide activities and tasks that enable learners and apprentices to make good progress.

- Teachers of learners who have high needs do not effectively use their learning support assistants to ensure that learners develop the skills they need to make good progress.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not use the naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' written English skills. Teachers' feedback on learners' written work does not challenge learners to improve. As a result, learners repeat errors and do not make the progress of which they are capable. The quality of teachers' feedback is mostly good for learners studying art and design, sport, and business courses at level 3, where teachers ensure that learners are challenged effectively to improve their work.
- In practical lessons, learners enjoy their learning; they attend lessons equipped and ready to learn. Learners benefit from high-quality, well-maintained learning facilities and resources. Learners studying media, music and performing arts courses have access to well-equipped rehearsal rooms, a television studio for recording and a large performance space. Hairdressing and beauty learners have salons and therapy rooms, which are of a high industry standard. Learners who have high needs have access to a training flat, which they enjoy working in and develop appropriate skills for independent living.
- Teachers improve learners' practical skills to meet the demands of the course. For example, learners enrolled on plumbing programmes work adeptly with low carbon steel pipes to produce work of industry-standard. Hairdressing learners develop good knowledge of hair sectioning, graduated and uniform cuts. Adult students studying on access to higher education (HE) courses produce good-quality academic assignments. Learners in practical classes understand and can articulate the importance of the use of appropriate personal protective equipment.
- The majority of learners know their target grades and what they need to do to achieve these. However, in a minority of subjects, including health and social care and early years, too many learners do not. Too few adult learners are set aspirational target grades that enable them to achieve to the level of which they are capable.
- Teachers of vocational subjects on adult learning provision effectively promote mathematics; as a result, learners develop good mathematical skills. Adult learners studying accountancy use complex calculations to solve problems successfully. Learners who have high needs develop good money management skills. However, few teachers of vocational subjects effectively promote English or mathematics on study programmes.
- Teachers develop well the learners' skills for employment by using real-life activities that link coherently learning in the classroom to the world of work. For example, teachers of travel and tourism enable learners training to be air stewards to respond appropriately in the event of a hijack. Art and design learners benefit from working on a range of live creative projects from The Princes Foundation for the built environment.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Too many learners do not attend their courses regularly or turn up on time. During the inspection, attendance was low in sport, art and design, health and social care, plumbing, and particularly low in English and mathematics lessons. Around one in four students were absent from lessons.
- Adult learners attend their lessons punctually, but poor punctuality among study programme learners and apprentices inhibits their ability to achieve aspirational targets

beyond the requirements of their qualifications. Teachers' acceptance of poor punctuality does not help learners to develop essential employability skills.

- The behaviour of learners has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Learners and apprentices are respectful to one another and to their teachers. Managers resolve appropriately incidents of poor behaviour. As a result, learners feel safe and know how to report their concerns.
- Learners feel safe. Timely completion of workshop risk assessments ensures that learners have a good awareness of safe practice. Through the comprehensive student induction activities and tutorial programmes, learners and apprentices understand how to keep safe when using the internet. Notwithstanding this practical guidance, learners and apprentices have an insufficient understanding of the dangers posed by extremism and radicalisation.
- Too many study programme learners are not following the tutorial curriculum. As a result, these learners do not have sufficient opportunities to discuss ethical and moral issues in society.
- The majority of apprentices and learners on level 3 programmes enjoy their study and take pride in their work. However, in too many lessons, learners following study programmes at levels 1 and 2 do not demonstrate the same readiness to learn or contribute to their lessons. As a consequence, this hinders them from making good progress.
- During English and mathematics lessons, study programme learners pay little attention to the feedback they receive. Consequently, they do not make improvements to their work, do not develop their knowledge and use of English and mathematics, and lack an understanding of the relevance of these topics to their future careers.
- The majority of learners and apprentices acquire theoretical knowledge and gain practical skills to the standards expected of their qualifications. However, too many teachers do not challenge their learners and apprentices to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that learners have sufficient opportunities to explore impartial careers advice and guidance. This includes access to advice from a highly trained careers adviser. However, while the majority of younger learners studying at level 3 take up this guidance, not enough adults and younger learners enrolled on level 1 and 2 courses do so.
- Most study programme learners take up suitable work placements and work-related opportunities. As a result, they develop good work-related skills specific to their sectors of study and work. However, around a third of learners with high needs do not have access to appropriate work experience that will enable them to improve their employability skills.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- Too many learners do not make good progress from their starting points. Not enough learners enrolled on study programmes at level 3 excel. The small cohorts of learners studying on art and 3D design, English literature and sport make at least their expected progress. Learners with high needs on vocational provision progress and achieve at least as well as their peers.

- Leaders' data indicates that nearly half of learners studying at all levels are making better than the expected progress. However, managers recognise that more work is required to ensure that all learners achieve their qualification and make rapid progress in developing further their skills and knowledge.
- The majority of learners successfully complete their courses. Although leaders and managers have halted the significant decline in the number of learners who were successful in achieving their qualification at the previous inspection, the proportion varies too much between different subjects and different types of qualifications. For example, a high proportion of learners achieve on sports, English literature and health and social care courses. However, too few achieve on preparing for life and work, media and business courses.
- Most learners are enrolled on 16 to 19 study programmes. The proportion who complete successfully has increased since the previous inspection, but too many learners do not achieve. Only around three quarters of adults achieve their qualifications.
- Too few learners studying English and mathematics at GCSE achieve high grades. In 2016/17, the proportion of learners achieving an A\* to C or 9 to 4 grade pass at English GCSE increased significantly and to above the national rate. However, too many learners did not make sufficient progress in improving their English skills. The proportion of learners achieving a high grade pass at mathematics GCSE declined slightly and is low.
- Around half of learners studying English functional skills courses achieve their qualifications. Just over a third of young people who study mathematics functional skills at level 1 achieve their qualifications. Too many adults studying English and mathematics functional skills do not achieve.
- Most apprentices studying at advance level achieve their qualification within their planned time. However, although significantly improved since the previous inspection, only around half of the apprentices studying at intermediate level achieve their qualification within their planned time. Achievement varies too much across subjects. Most apprentices who study with the subcontractor, Pentland ALC Ltd, achieve. The majority of apprentices who achieve their qualifications gain permanent employment and higher levels of responsibility.
- Achievement gaps between different groups of learners, such as males and females, are narrowing over time. Learners who have a declared disability and/or learning difficulty achieve as well as their peers. However, most learners in receipt of bursary funding and learners who were previously in receipt of free school meals do not achieve as well as their peers. Only around half of those with experience of local authority care achieve their qualifications.
- The majority of learners who achieve their qualifications progress into employment, apprenticeships and higher or further education. The majority of level 1 learners progress to study at level 2 within the college. Not enough learners who study at level 2 continue to level 3. Most learners with high needs progress to positive destinations.



## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- Study programmes make up the majority of the college's provision. The college provides study programmes within 10 subject areas. Half of all learners study at level 3, with a further four tenths working towards a level 2 programme. The remaining learners are studying at level 1. The very large majority of learners undertake vocational qualifications, with a small minority studying for a small range of A-level qualifications.
- Leaders ensure that study programmes meet the funding requirements. Most learners take part in work-related learning and work experience that develop their skills well and prepare them for their next steps. For example, learners enrolled on legal secretarial courses gain good understanding of the importance of work prioritisation and time management in the workplace.
- Too much teaching and learning requires improvement. The effectiveness of teaching varies too much between curriculum areas and levels of learning. The improvement actions implemented by learning leaders have yet to raise standards in order to ensure that all learners achieve their potential.
- Teachers do not always plan taught sessions well enough to meet the needs of learners. For example, theory lessons lack stimulating classroom-based activities and do not create interest and curiosity. Consequently, learners are not working as assiduously as they should be or making the progress of which they are capable.
- Most vocational teachers do not routinely promote the development of learners' English and mathematics skills well enough. As a result, learners cannot identify and avoid repeating such errors. Teachers do not demonstrate high expectations and promote the use of good written English. For example, in lessons teachers' writing on the whiteboard, in presentations and in handouts includes spelling and punctuation errors.
- Learners participate in a good range of enrichment activities. Many of these activities encourage reluctant learners to get involved in opportunities which enhance their personal and social skills. Activities include trips and visits that are purposeful in enhancing learners' understanding of work. For example, travel and tourism learners visit local airports to take part in training days that provide them with a good insight into how staff manage emergency evacuations.

### Adult learning programmes

### Requires improvement

- Approximately 400 learners are enrolled on adult classes; most study on a part-time basis. The largest adult provision is accounting, counselling and construction. A small minority of learners study English and mathematics. There is also a very small group of learners enrolled on the access to HE programme.
- Leaders have been too slow to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of local adults and communities, including the unemployed. This was a weakness identified at the previous inspection.
- Too few teachers set aspirational targets that challenge learners to excel and achieve high grades. Teachers do not routinely use the detailed information gathered on learners'



starting points to plan stimulating learning activities and tasks. For example, all accountancy learners complete the same worksheets, regardless of their ability. Legal secretaries who already meet typing speed requirements do not receive any challenge to exceed these.

- Too many learners do not improve their English skills. Achievement of English functional skills qualifications in the previous year was low. However, in the current year a greater proportion of learners have achieved their English qualifications than previously. Teachers of adult learning provision promote effectively mathematics; as a result, most learners develop good mathematical skills.
- The majority of learners acquire technical skills and knowledge that prepare them well for their chosen career path or further study. For example, learners enrolled on plumbing courses skilfully apply a range of soldering techniques. However, the standard of practical work in most subject areas meets, but does not exceed, the expected level.
- Most learners progress onto higher levels of study, gain employment or become self-employed as a result of their studies. Access to HE learners make better than expected progress, enabling many to receive offers from their chosen university.
- While the quality of the careers guidance is good for those who receive it, too few learners access the service. The qualified careers officer is available three days per week but not for adults attending evening classes.

## Apprenticeships

## Inadequate

- Currently, around 100 apprentices are in learning; of these, 22 are following the new electrical standards-based apprenticeships. Just over half are in subcontracted provision. The remaining apprentices follow apprenticeships framework programmes in a range of subject areas including accounting, plumbing, sports leadership and business administration. At present, 47 apprentices are undertaking advanced apprenticeships programmes in information technology and telecom professionals. In addition, 17 higher-level apprentices are participating in project management training with the subcontractor, Pentland ALC Ltd.
- Apprentices in the subcontracted provision do not receive their full entitlement to high-quality off-the-job learning. This impedes the rate at which they develop industry-specific skills and knowledge.
- Apprentices' progress varies significantly across the different subject areas, and too many do not make enough progress. High staff turnover in electrical engineering significantly limits assessors' capacity to conduct sufficient assessments and reviews of apprentices' progress.
- The progress of current apprentices trained directly by the college is too slow. Almost half of the apprentices fail to complete their programme within the planned duration. Managers have not introduced the planned improvements to apprentices' tracking systems quickly enough. Consequently, staff do not have sufficient and reliable information to manage effectively apprentices' progress.
- Apprentices receive ineffective reviews of their progress. Short-term targets set by assessors often contain insufficient detail to challenge apprentices to make rapid progress. Employers are not routinely involved in the reviews of their apprentices'

progress. Since June 2017, too few plumbing and electrical installation apprentices have benefited from recorded reviews of their progress.

- Managers' planning of apprentices' programmes is ineffective and does not meet the needs of apprentices. As noted at the previous inspection, the vast majority of apprentices are given the same length of time on programme irrespective of needs and skills. This is particularly the case in the subcontracted provision.
- Too often, teachers and assessors set work in line with the minimum requirements of qualifications. Consequently, they do not challenge more able apprentices to achieve their full potential. Managers have not made timely arrangements for electrical installation apprentices to complete the required end point assessment. As a result, this is significantly delaying apprentices' completion of their programmes.
- Most apprentices develop good practical skills as a result of working alongside industry professionals in their workplaces. Most employers value the contribution apprentices make to their businesses. Some apprentices are able to undertake a wider range of tasks and demonstrate increased responsibility for their own work. For example, apprentices undertake complex electrical installation work in offices and in homes to a high standard with a minimum of supervision.

### **Provision for learners with high needs**

### **Requires improvement**

- The college receives funding for 68 learners with high needs. Thirty-five of these learners participate in pre-entry to entry-level 3 programmes specifically designed for learners with high needs. The remaining learners are following vocational programmes across the college, ranging from level 1 to 3.
- Too often, teachers provide tasks and activities that fail to challenge learners to extend their learning. For example, in a lesson at entry level, learners spent much time taking photographs using a digital camera and downloading them to the computer. This was a repeat of previous lessons; learners found the tasks easy and were not challenged to develop more in-depth skills and knowledge.
- Teachers do not provide learners with appropriate feedback to enable them to improve quickly. Where given, feedback for the majority of learners is cursory and does not support further knowledge or skills development.
- Too few learners have the opportunity to participate in work-related activity that meets their individual needs and long-term career aspirations. Managers have firm plans in place with local employers to secure opportunities to ensure all learners receive their study programme entitlement. However, these have yet to take place.
- Teachers use assessment information to provide programmes that enable learners to develop the skills they need to be independent adults. The majority of learners in specialist provision make expected progress towards their qualifications and personal objectives.
- Teachers effectively review learners' short-, medium-, and long-term targets. The targets meet all the requirements of the individuals' education and health care plans. As a result, learners understand the progress they are making and are on track to achieve their qualifications.

- Teachers of specialist provision provide a supportive, positive culture. This creates a safe environment in which learners feel confident. As a result, learners participate enthusiastically and contribute positively in lessons.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130677
Type of provider	Further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,065
Principal/CEO	Saboochi Famili
Telephone number	020 85088311
Website	<a href="http://www.efc.ac.uk">www.efc.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	138	161	539	239	663	187	1	80
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	8	14	4	57	0	17		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	68							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Pentland ALC Ltd							

## 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

Ruth Harrison, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Lambert	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Fawcus	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Masterson	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Swithenbank	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Gunn	Ofsted Inspector
Eamonn Egan	Ofsted Inspector
Darrell Bate	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Heaney	Ofsted Inspector

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