

# Itchen College

Sixth form college

**Inspection dates**

4–6 December 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>		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>		
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Despite improvements in the previous year, many A-level students are on courses that have underperformed for too long. Too many A-level students leave their course early.
- Too few students at levels 1 and 2 achieved their qualifications in the previous academic year.
- Too few adult students achieve their qualifications.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good. Not enough students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Not enough teachers plan and teach lessons that take into account students' prior achievement and potential, so that they can excel.
- Managers have not identified rapidly enough the weaknesses in teaching and learning and trained teachers to improve their practice quickly.
- Too much feedback to students lacks precise information on what students have done well, what they need to do to improve and how they might achieve this.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The principal and senior leadership team have worked effectively to establish a culture of high expectations and aspirations for students.
- Students on vocational courses, particularly at level 3, make very good progress and a very high proportion achieve their qualifications.
- Students exemplify the British values of tolerance and respect while at college. They uphold college values in their behaviour, conduct and attitudes. They value the diversity that the international students bring to college life.
- Governors, senior leaders and managers are setting high standards and leading by example to bring about improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They take pride in their work.
- Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities to extend their learning outside the curriculum, such as industry-specific qualifications, visits and sporting fixtures.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Itchen College is a medium-sized sixth form college on the east side of Southampton and is one of three colleges in the city. The college offers academic and vocational courses at entry level and at levels 1, 2 and 3. Most students are aged 16 to 18. About three quarters of the students study at level 3. Forty students with high needs attend the college.
- The proportion of students in Southampton who make better than average progress in their studies, including English and mathematics, at key stage four is significantly below the national rate. Participation rates in higher education locally are among the lowest in the country. Rates of unemployment in Southampton are slightly higher than the regional and national rates. About three quarters of the population locally are qualified to level 2 and about three fifths to level 3.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by training teachers to plan and teach lessons that help students to excel. Ensure that teachers take enough account of students' prior learning, starting points and potential.
- Ensure that teachers' feedback to students on their work identifies accurately and precisely the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to improve. Monitor the quality and impact of teachers' feedback and set them targets for improvement when it is not of a high enough standard.
- Share the good practice that already exists so that teachers consistently expect the highest standard of their students and teaching inspires and motivates them.
- Improve the numbers of students who achieve their qualifications by identifying accurately the reasons why they underperform. Rapidly put in place actions to mitigate these, particularly in subjects where students have underperformed for several years.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires Improvement

- Governors and the principal have made positive and important changes to the senior leadership team since the previous inspection and in doing so are starting to make progress on improving the weaknesses identified at that time.
- The principal, with the support of the governors, is re-establishing the position of the college as the provider of choice within the local community. They are developing productive working relationships with local stakeholders, such as schools and the city council.
- The principal and senior leadership team have worked effectively to embed a culture of high expectations and aspirations throughout the staff team. They lead by example and, in doing so, they hold curriculum managers to account for improving students' achievements.
- Governors and senior leaders have worked hard to ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose and meets community needs. They provide a broad academic and vocational curriculum which meets students' diverse needs and starting points. Most subjects are offered at a range of levels so that students can move on to higher levels of learning or to relevant employment locally.
- Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and are taking appropriate actions to improve the underperforming areas. However, several actions have not yet had sufficient time to show impact. Too many courses have underperformed for too many years.
- Senior leaders have placed much emphasis on teachers improving their classroom practice. They are ensuring that teachers have relevant opportunities to develop their skills through training, mentoring and collaborative projects with other colleges through the college improvement fund. Managers and teachers are beginning to share good practice across the college. This has not yet had enough impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers welcome the opportunities this gives and value the networks that are developing.
- Senior leaders have recently redesigned lesson observation arrangements to increase the impact they have on improving the quality of teaching and learning. They provide more opportunity for teachers to reflect on their classroom practice, which is enabling leaders to identify more accurately and precisely what help or support teachers need. Observers who jointly observed lessons with inspectors tended to focus on what the teacher did rather than the impact this had on students' learning. They did not identify all the areas for improvement noted by inspectors.
- Leaders are developing further their performance management and appraisal processes. While the majority of staff follow the timetable for appraisal, it is not yet effective in ensuring that teachers and managers agree specific and measurable targets for improvement. The performance management of staff focuses appropriately on the quality of learning, teaching and outcomes. Leaders take appropriate action to support staff to improve their practice or to leave the college.
- Leaders and managers promote equality and inclusivity across the college. Students value

the culture of understanding and mutual respect that permeates the campus. As a result, students are confident communicators who express their views articulately. They work harmoniously with each other in a positive atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

- Leaders and managers have not resolved the variability in performance across A-level courses. Their actions taken since the previous inspection have not ensured consistent, rapid and sustained improvement, particularly for courses that have underperformed for several years. Even on courses where students make very good progress, too many leave before the end of the course.
- Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, but they have been overoptimistic in their self-assessment judgements. Managers in several faculty-level self-assessments have not identified the reasons for students not making the progress of which they are capable. As a result, the actions for improvement are not sufficiently precise or specific. Managers do not make sufficient links between the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and students' outcomes.
- Managers have identified that students from disadvantaged groups, such as free school meals or those declaring a disability, underperform in comparison to non-disadvantaged groups. A new member of staff has been appointed to work with and mentor the disadvantaged students to improve this aspect, but it is too soon to assess the impact.
- Senior leaders and managers have not remedied the three-year decline of overall achievement rates for 16- to 18-year-olds. Actions taken by leaders and managers since the previous inspection have not been effective enough to increase the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications. Factors that affected the decline in achievements at level 2 were not identified early enough to remedy the situation and improve students' outcomes.

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

- Governors are ambitious for the college. They have a clear vision for its future performance and its place in the local community. They are confident in the capacity of the new leadership team to bring about improvement.
- Governors have a clear understanding of most of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The reports they receive allow them to hold senior leaders to account more effectively. They have reorganised themselves since the previous inspection and have appointed new members who bring more relevant skills. This has strengthened their expertise further.
- Governors, leaders and managers have set out their ambitions for the college in a new strategic plan. This identifies ambitious areas for development, including measurable targets for the improvement of students' performance.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and staff apply these well and work together effectively and coherently to ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. Designated safeguarding officers are knowledgeable and well informed. They use local information to

ensure that students are aware of the risks that exist in their communities.

- Staff receive appropriate training for their roles, including annual updates. They use this training to keep students safe and help those at risk. Staff have established effective partnerships with external agencies, such as the child and adolescent mental health service, to make sure that students get the help they need and, where feasible, remain on their course.
- Leaders and managers ensure that recruitment procedures for new staff are adhered to and that those appointed are appropriately checked for their suitability to work with young people.
- Students feel safe at college. They know how to keep themselves safe online and in person. They know who to go to should they need support or advice.
- Staff manage safeguarding related to students' work placements in health and social care and early years well. They make appropriate checks on placements before students start work. New procedures ensure that this now applies to placements in all other subject areas.
- Staff have worked effectively to ensure that students know how to protect themselves and their friends from the dangers that those who hold extremist views may pose.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection but is not yet consistently good. In too many subjects, teachers do not set work that is sufficiently demanding for the most able students, and therefore these students do not make rapid progress or excel in their learning. Teachers provide additional work that is frequently a variation of the previous task and at the same level. Students find this work too easy and they do not benefit enough from opportunities to develop the analytical and evaluative skills needed to achieve higher grades. For example, level 3 information technology students were asked to construct an evaluative opinion. They were given a gapped handout and a prescribed form of words to arrange into a sentence, which hindered and constrained their opportunity to form their own opinion.
- Teachers have accurate information about students' prior achievements, skills and starting points, collected at the start of the course. Too many teachers do not use this information well enough to ensure that learning stimulates and motivates students to make rapid progress.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not plan learning activities precisely enough to ensure that all students make good progress. Too often, teachers set group-work activities without ensuring that students understand their role or have the skills to participate fully in the activity. As a result, too many students work on the same task, which they find too easy. A few lose concentration and make little progress. For example, where students worked in groups, too often one or more group members did not contribute to the answers.
- A minority of teachers' feedback on students' work is not sufficiently precise or developmental to support students to improve further. For a minority of students, feedback is too vague. As a result, students do not have clear enough information about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work, gain new skills or increase

the breadth of their knowledge. For example, in applied law, students do not develop further their ability to analyse or apply legal theories as teachers' feedback is too brief.

- In a significant minority of academic subjects, teachers focus too much on the acquisition of knowledge essential for students to achieve their qualifications. Students do not deepen their subject knowledge well enough. Teachers are often too quick to provide students with answers to their questions and do not give students enough time to think for themselves or learn from their mistakes. For example, in GCSE English students were asked to identify a correct answer by choosing a coloured card. The teacher acknowledged correct answers but then explained why the answer was correct, rather than giving students an opportunity to explain or justify their responses.
- Teachers use the progress tracking system effectively to check students' performance. The majority of students know the grade that they are expected to achieve and the targets they need to complete to be successful in achieving their qualification. However, too often, students' progress towards their targets is not rapid because they do not know precisely what it is that they need to do to achieve those targets quickly, particularly in mathematics, law and science.
- Most students are curious and ambitious. They follow teachers' directions closely and work conscientiously in lessons. The large majority enjoy their study programme and, as a result, show positive attitudes to learning, even when activities do not stimulate them enough. Most students develop in confidence, are sensitive to the needs of others and develop good personal and oral communication skills.
- In the better subjects, which include creative arts, art, travel and tourism, public services and sport, teachers have high expectations of students. Lessons are well paced, learning is stimulating, and students' participation and interest are kept throughout the lesson. Students find the work challenging, stimulating and inspiring. Teachers provide oral feedback that helps them to produce work of a high standard and develop evaluation and analytical skills. For example, art students understand the style and motivation of the artists they study well and can draw upon these influences to improve the quality of their own work. Sport students can articulate and explain complex biomechanical processes such as the functions of skeletal systems and the heart.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Students have positive attitudes to learning which are reflected in the pride they take in their work. They develop self-confidence and self-belief, many from low starting points. Students respect each other's views and ideas. They share their knowledge and skills during lessons and learn to work collaboratively. For example, level 3 childcare students link what they have seen or done on work placements with relevant developmental learning theories during group activities on the early years framework.
- Students take pride in their work. They value the feedback they receive from teachers about the standard and the presentation of their work. For example, level 2 cabin crew students produce neat, legible, clearly labelled work, using well-constructed sentences, to show how well they understand the topic. Level 1 vocational studies students enthusiastically supplement their answers with additional information and the most-able complete higher-level tasks diligently and confidently.

- Most students attend lessons punctually and arrive prepared for learning. Students know how their attendance is monitored and, where necessary, teachers support them to catch up on work they may have missed. Students' attendance at lessons is improving. Leaders' recent changes to curriculum design, the support students receive from tutors and changes to the way that teachers raise concerns about students have helped to identify those with poor attendance swiftly.
- Students receive impartial careers guidance from staff that helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps and longer-term careers goals. Students are confident about making applications to university. They are articulate in explaining the rationale for their degree choices and they check their current academic performance in relation to entry grade requirements. Students who are not aspiring to higher education receive good support for job applications and writing CVs.
- Staff use their industry experience and expertise to make students aware of the demands of different job roles to help them make informed choices. For example, public services teachers provide very specific guidance on the entry points students should be aiming for in the armed forces, based on their likely grades, skills and ambitions.
- Most students complete an external work experience placement. They present themselves in a professional manner and many become highly regarded by their employers in a short period of time. They develop relevant skills for work, such as attendance, punctuality and following instructions. In vocational subjects, teachers are adept at linking students' experiences on their placements to learning at college. This link needs further development for students on academic courses.
- Recent changes to the teaching of English and mathematics have resulted in students making better progress in these subjects. Leaders' introduction of the personal tutor role has ensured that one person is responsible for monitoring all aspects of a student's study programme. Most teachers emphasise the importance of students developing their English and mathematics skills to enable them to be successful at work or university. However, leaders recognise that students' attendance at lessons for English and mathematics is not yet as high as for their main course.
- Students take part in a wide range of additional activities to improve their employment prospects, their personal and social skills and their well-being. For example, travel and tourism students achieve qualifications in cabin crew and ticketing systems. Music and performing arts student regularly perform to student and community audiences. The college's football team won the Association of Colleges national competition in 2018.
- Adult students speak confidently about how the skills they are learning on their courses are improving their employment prospects and their daily lives. For example, students studying GCSE English in the evening, who work as classroom assistants in schools want to achieve this so that they can become higher-level teaching assistants.
- Students exemplify British values in their conduct and behaviour. They value the diversity of students who attend the college and they benefit from learning alongside students from different countries who attend the college's international student programme.

### Outcomes for learners

### Requires improvement

- Despite improvement in the progress students make on A-level courses overall, on too

many courses students do not make the progress of which they are capable. Managers have not yet been effective in improving rapidly the performance of these courses to a high enough level. Several courses have performed poorly for at least three years.

- Students on courses such as biology, sociology, law, English literature and IT do not make sufficient progress and too few achieve their qualifications because they leave their course early. Even on courses where students make very good progress, such as A-level English language and art subjects, too many students leave before the end of the course and do not sit their examinations.
- Students' achievements have declined over the past three years, albeit by small amounts. Leaders and managers have found the causes of underperformance and have put actions in place to improve these courses, but these are too recent to have had enough impact. The proportion of students on courses at levels 1 and 2 who achieved their qualifications in the previous academic year was too low.
- Too many adult students do not achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders were not successful in ensuring that there were no achievement gaps for several groups of students in the previous academic year. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities were less successful than students who do not have additional learning needs. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those who qualify for free college meals, were considerably less successfully than those who do not.
- Students on most vocational courses make very good progress from their starting points, especially at level 3. Students on courses in public services, sport, and travel and tourism are particularly successful. The progress these students make has improved over the previous three years and a high proportion of them achieve merit and distinction grades.
- Students produce written and practical work of a good standard, at least in line with that expected for the level of their course. For example, level 3 music technology students produce original compositions to a very high standard, using their vocal and performance talents and information technology skills deftly.
- Students are confident in the progress they are making, and they can articulate clearly what they have learned and the skills they have developed because of being at college. For example, public services students produce personal training plans that use their knowledge of anatomy and physiology effectively to improve their fitness. They relate their fitness goals to the entrance tests they must pass for their chosen service or armed force.
- The proportion of students who achieve GCSE grades 4 or above in English and/or mathematics has improved and is higher than the large majority of providers. Where they are not successful at improving their examination grade, they make progress with their English and/or mathematics skills as a result of their learning. Several students who already have a grade 4 benefit from the opportunity to achieve a higher grade when they need it for their chosen career, such as being a paramedic.
- A high proportion of students move on to positive destinations such as further learning or employment when they achieve their qualification. Students' progression to higher education from level 3 courses is low.
- Students with high needs make good progress with the development of their personal and social skills. They are very successful at achieving their academic and vocational



qualifications.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130704
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,300
Principal/CEO	Alex Scott
Telephone number	02380 435636
Website	<a href="http://www.itchen.ac.uk">www.itchen.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+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	20	23	160	105	1096	29	–	–
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	41							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

## 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

Richard Pemble, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Hucker	Ofsted Inspector
Joy Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Gavin Murray	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Learner View**

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

### **Employer View**

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

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2019