

Inspection of Suffolk New College

Inspection dates: 12–15 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Suffolk New College is based in Ipswich town centre. Most students aged 16 to 18 are from the local and surrounding rural areas. Standards on entry are below the average for the East of England. Around half of all young people following programmes at the college did not achieve five or more high-grade GCSE qualifications. This reflects the locality, where the proportion of people in the area educated to level 3 and above is lower than in the region and across England.

At the time of inspection, the college offers education and training in 13 of the 15 curriculum areas from entry level to full level 3. It offers specific courses for unaccompanied migrant children looked after by the state, and those who have not been in education or employment for a substantial time. The college has 2,254 study programme learners, 1,000 adult learners, 208 learners have high needs and 500 apprentices.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners like the college's inclusive and friendly environment. They are respectful of one another and staff and behave well. Learners appreciate the help and support they receive from teachers, staff and their peers.

Learners and apprentices value the professional experience and subject knowledge of their teachers. Teachers use their professional contacts well to ensure that learners develop a good understanding of their chosen careers. For example, guest speakers from the police and fire service help learners on public service courses to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Apprentices and learners enjoy the benefits of good-quality, industry-standard resources. For example, the college has invested significantly in new domestic gas training and assessment resources. As a result, apprentices work on a wide range of appliances that match those found in their workplaces. Most learners acquire good-quality practical skills that are relevant to their chosen careers.

Learners on supported learning courses do not develop the skills they need to live and work independently. Managers do not accurately assess their learning needs on entry. Consequently, many of them are on programmes that are too easy for them. As a result, they do not rapidly learn the skills they require to become more independent.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Teachers and course leaders plan the content of programmes well. As a result, most learners build their skills and knowledge in a logical manner. Teachers adapt courses to better match learners' progression and employment aspirations. For example, public service learners take part in a four-day residential 'look at life' course at a Royal Air Force base. This develops their understanding of what life is like in the armed forces.

Most teachers ensure that learners remember what they have learned previously before moving on to the next topic. Teachers carefully plan learning activities to reinforce learners' knowledge. Apprentices can explain what they have learned and what they can do better since starting their course. For example, plumbing apprentices can explain how they use a range of boiler and pipework components in domestic, commercial and industrial settings.

Most teachers use their subject experience effectively to enthuse learners and apprentices. They set high expectations for the standard of work produced. Teachers often plan exciting and challenging learning activities that learners and apprentices enjoy.

Managers and teachers have not developed an effective curriculum for learners on supported learning courses. Managers lack aspiration for what learners can and

want to do. Teachers do not carry out initial assessments of learners' specific learning needs on entry, for example how to prepare learners to live more independently. Teachers do not consider the life experience of learners or the skills they have previously developed.

Teachers ensure that most learners access purposeful and relevant work placements. Learners effectively put their new skills, knowledge and understanding into practice in real work settings. However, learners studying on preparation to employment and creative arts courses do not benefit from the same opportunities. Consequently, they do not experience or learn what employers expect of their employees in a realistic work environment.

Teachers do not use the information they gather from assessing the quality of learners' work to plan activities that help them improve their knowledge further. Too many teachers do not ensure that learners receive detailed feedback to help them improve the quality of their work. As a result, learners do not know what they need to do to achieve the grades they aspire to.

Too few learners improve their numeracy skills; too few achieve mathematics qualifications. Because teachers do not identify specific gaps in learners' knowledge, they do not teach them the skills that learners need to gain meaningful qualifications. Learners do not understand core mathematical processes and concepts. For example, too often adult learners cannot explain how they carried out basic processes, such as how to add negative numbers.

Teachers ensure that most learners receive effective and relevant careers advice and guidance throughout their programmes. This is particularly effective for learners studying health and child care courses. As a result, learners' progression to the next level of study and to employment is positive. However, this is not the case for learners studying on specialist high needs courses. These learners are not clear about what their options are or how they will achieve their next steps.

Learners who speak English as an additional language are often on an inappropriate level of study. Teachers do not assess the starting points of these learners accurately. They do not consider learners' career aspirations to ensure that they study the most appropriate course. Many adult learners do not develop their speech and language skills quickly.

Teachers enable learners to explore topics and develop their knowledge and approaches to living in Britain. For example, learners debate whether people should wear the remembrance poppy. Learners' responses are thoughtful and respectful. However, too many learners are unable to articulate or apply what they learn at college to their chosen careers and work.

Additional help for learners with education and health care plans is good. Learning support staff work very effectively with teachers to ensure that additional support strategies enable learners to study successfully. For example, staff skilfully manage learners' potentially disruptive behaviour to ensure that they complete learning

tasks. However, support for learners with very high needs studying in specialist provision is weak. Staff often provide learners with too much help, focusing on task completion rather than learning. Consequently, these learners do not develop their knowledge and skills well enough.

Teachers do not ensure that learners understand the threat of radicalisation and extremism to their everyday lives and work. A few learners can talk at a superficial level about the impact of drugs and knife crime. However, they do not make meaningful connections to the dangers associated with the areas in which they live and wish to work.

Leaders often do not accurately identify the areas for improvement across the college. Not all managers know the actions they need to take to affect positive change within the curriculum. As a result, required improvements are often too slow or ineffective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have taken a range of actions to improve safeguarding arrangements. For example, increasing the number of trained safeguarding officers. As a result, they deal with referrals promptly and appropriately.

Leaders have strengthened arrangements for checking the safety of vulnerable learners. As a result, support for these learners is now effective.

Learners feel safe and are safe at college.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers need to significantly improve the proportion of learners who gain mathematics GCSE grades 9 to 4 and functional skills qualifications. Teachers need to ensure that learners develop vocationally relevant numeracy skills to help them gain and sustain employment.
- Teachers need to accurately assess the prior skills and knowledge of learners with high needs. They need to identify how learners can live more independently and provide an appropriate curriculum to help them work towards their career goals.
- Teachers need to ensure that learners understand how to improve the quality of their work. Teachers need to use assessment feedback to inform how they plan and sequence learning activities to ensure that learners remember more over time.
- Leaders need to accurately review the quality of provision to identify key areas for improvement. They need to ensure that the interventions managers make are effective in making rapid improvement.
- Leaders and managers need to ensure that learners and apprentices apply their

knowledge of radicalisation and extremism effectively to their daily lives. They need to help learners understand how to recognise and deal with the local issues that could have an impact on their personal safety.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130820
Address	Rope Walk Ipswich Suffolk IP4 1LT
Contact number	01473382200
Website	www.suffolk.ac.uk
Principal	Viv Gillespie
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	17–20 October 2017
Main subcontractors	Needham Market Football Club Inspire Suffolk

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. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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