

Inspection of East Coast College

Inspection dates: 11–14 February 2020

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

Information about this provider

In August 2018, East Coast College merged with Lowestoft Sixth Form College. The merged college has retained the name East Coast College and has two main campuses. Most of the learning is based in Suffolk at the Lowestoft campus where the sixth form college is based. The other campus is in Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. The college serves coastal and rural communities in Suffolk and Norfolk.

The college offers courses in all subject areas. At the time of inspection, most students were on education programmes for young people. There are approximately 2,500 of these students and around half study at level 3. There are around 1,100 adult learners and approximately half study foundation level qualifications. Apprenticeships is the smallest provision type. There are approximately 640 apprentices studying mainly framework-based apprenticeships. The apprenticeship offer reflects local priorities for engineering, manufacturing technologies and construction. Other apprenticeships are in business administration, supported teaching and learning, hairdressing and hospitality. Ninety-six students enrolled at the college are in receipt of high needs funding.

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

Students and apprentices have good relationships with their teachers. They are courteous, respectful and caring. The calm, orderly environment at the college helps students to learn. They are highly motivated and value their learning. They like that teachers listen to them and are always around to help. Students are proud of the practical skills they develop.

Teachers and leaders know their students well and want them to succeed in life. They provide students with many opportunities to develop their resilience, confidence and independence. They have high expectations for students' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. As a result, students leave the college with a clear understanding of how to interact positively with a range of different people.

Students enjoy a specialist and up-to-date curriculum developed in partnership with local employers. For example, leaders have developed the science, technology, engineering and mathematics curriculum through these strong links. Students gain appropriate workplace skills to progress into the energy and technology sectors.

Students and apprentices attend regularly and are punctual. They display good attitudes to learning. They know how to study effectively and take responsibility for their own progress. They prepare thoroughly for recap exercises which feature at the beginning of most lessons. Students and apprentices participate well and persevere to achieve.

Students understand how to keep healthy and maintain an active lifestyle. For example, childcare students have targets related to drinking more water or eating a healthy diet. They understand how their own habits can influence the children in their care. Students develop a sound understanding of the features of healthy personal relationships.

Students benefit from very good personal help and advice and they feel safe. Well-being staff are highly trained and work effectively with partners and external agencies to support students. They seek help for those facing challenges and difficult personal issues. They work closely and effectively with vulnerable students to ensure their safety.

Students effectively represent the views of their peers by becoming student ambassadors. They participate fully in college life and develop effective leadership skills. Many of the ambassadors benefit from peer support training. This allows them to help those students experiencing friendship issues.

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

Since the merger, leaders and governors have developed robust systems to drive improvement. They watch improvements in the quality of learning carefully. They take swift action should any dips in performance occur. Senior leaders have revised the curriculum content to better match with students' aspirations. Most students achieve and progress to higher levels of study.

Students benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Teachers use questioning very effectively to check and extend learning in lessons. As a result, students recall and apply knowledge previously learned. For example, level 3 learners studying childcare could recall child development theories. They were able to explain how these applied to the children in their charge.

Teachers plan valuable live projects to extend students' learning beyond the classroom. For example, construction staff have developed a school refurbishment project. Students studying different trades work together to renovate the school. This allows them to apply vocational skills and knowledge to more complex situations. As a result, they work confidently and independently. Their practical skills develop into their long-term memory.

Students benefit from volunteering experiences to help them apply and deepen their skills, such as sports students running structured weekly coaching sessions at a local school. Where students take part in work experience, they can link theory to practice. For example, health and social care students could explain how the Mental Health Capacity Act protects those who may be unable to make decisions about their own care. They relate this learning to their work placements in hospitals and other care settings.

Teachers develop students' knowledge and skills beyond the qualification. They provide high-quality feedback that helps students to improve. For example, in construction, teachers target students to aim for professional workmanship. Students know to consider the expectations of the client. As a result, they produce a high-quality finish to their work. Students and apprentices use technical and professional vocabulary very well. They communicate fluently with their team members in a professional setting.

Leaders use public funding effectively to support disadvantaged adults in the community. Students develop confidence and the specific skills needed to enter the workplace. For example, the college offers a short hospitality course in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Students develop customer service skills and vocational knowledge, and also build their confidence. Leaders work with local communities to remove barriers to learning and employment, for example basic skills courses provided in a local library to fit around the irregular working hours of migrant workers.

Students with high needs achieve well at East Coast College. They become independent and progress to higher levels of study. Leaders and managers use funding very effectively to provide them with high-quality specialist support. For example, those with a visual or hearing impairment receive effective support. This includes Braille training, cane training and using adaptive technology. Teachers and support staff are appropriately trained by specialists to teach students with high needs. They plan and adapt lessons effectively to support individuals to learn and make good progress over time.

Staff work effectively with the local NHS trust to provide valuable supported internships for a few students with high needs. Students rotate across several departments such as pharmacy, housekeeping and catering. As a result, they gain good workplace skills that lead to full-time employment. However, too few students benefit from these valuable employment opportunities.

Apprentices' theoretical knowledge is superficial. They struggle to recall and apply new knowledge to different contexts. Assessors do not establish apprentices' starting points well enough. They do not tailor the learning effectively. As a result, apprentices do not complete within their planned timescales.

Leaders work with employers to agree the apprenticeship programme, unit choice and mode of delivery. They work together to support apprentices to progress through the different levels. Apprentices benefit from high-quality off-the-job and employer-based training within the workplace. As a result, they develop good practical skills making them highly valued by employers.

Teachers provide effective careers guidance and prepare students well for their next steps. Students are confident about their progression plans. They can explain why they are right for them. Students know the specific courses, training opportunities and higher education goals they have. They understand how their course has supported them towards achieving these. Apprentices do not receive impartial careers guidance. They are unaware of the opportunities beyond their employer and their job roles.

Young students are not making good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. They struggle to demonstrate positive attitudes to improving their mathematics and English. Students' attendance is often low in these lessons. Students with high needs have lower achievement compared to their peers.

Teachers benefit from good professional development. Leaders have adopted an effective 'grow your own' culture of staff development. This has enabled them to overcome the recruitment issues typical of the region. The 'emerging leaders' programme has supported staff to secure promoted positions in the college. Leaders have implemented the 'research into education and development' observation strategy. This strategy has been effective in sharing best practice in the classroom for young people and adults.

Managers do not help assessors to develop their teaching skills. Assessors focus too much on what apprentices can do within the workplace and on the completion of tasks. Assessors do not support apprentices' development or recall of key theoretical concepts. As a result, apprentices are unable to describe the new knowledge they have acquired. They are often unable to apply their knowledge to more complex tasks.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have developed an inclusive culture with safeguarding at its centre. They work effectively with partners to provide support for the most vulnerable students.

Students and apprentices understand how to keep themselves safe, including online. They are aware of the dangers associated with abuse of social media. They are tolerant of others and do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination. Staff deal swiftly and effectively with any issues that arise.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers need to improve the teaching skills of assessors. Assessors need to support apprentices' development and recall of key theoretical concepts. They need to ensure that apprentices can apply new learning to more complex workplace situations.
- Leaders and managers need to ensure that apprentices benefit from the same high-quality careers advice and guidance as adults and young people.
- Managers and teachers must improve the English and mathematics skills of young people, including those with high needs. Young people must attend their lessons. They must apply the same purpose to their English and mathematics learning as they do to their other studies.
- Leaders and managers need to increase the proportion of supported internship and employment opportunities for students with high needs.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130819
Address	St Peter's Street Lowestoft Suffolk NR32 2NB
Contact number	0800 854 695
Website	www.eastcoast.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Stuart Rimmer
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	15–18 May 2018
Main subcontractors	Sentinel Limited Inspire Limited DPA Performing Arts Academy Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. 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 students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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