

Inspection of Bexhill College

Inspection dates:

23 to 26 January 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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

Information about this provider

Bexhill College is a sixth form college located in Bexhill, East Sussex. At the time of the inspection there were approximately 2,200 students studying education programmes for young people, 59 adult students and 16 students in receipt of high needs funding.

The college offers a wide range of programmes from level 1 to 4. Most students study A level or vocational programmes at level 3 in a wide range of subjects including mathematics, law, the sciences, and art and design. Students also study T levels in areas such as health, education and early years and management and administration. The small number of adult students study part-time programmes such as English, mathematics and accounting.

The college does not work with any subcontractors. The college was last inspected in November 2019, when inspectors judged the quality of the provision to be good.

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

Students thrive in the calm, purposeful and professional environment staff create at the college. They relish the positive culture that is highly conducive to learning and social interaction. Consequently, students settle quickly into college life and make very secure and sustained progress from their starting points.

Students are highly motivated, arriving for their lessons promptly and are keen to start learning. They are polite, courteous and positive in their outlook. They are attentive in lessons supporting and encouraging each other, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, level 2 IT students practise giving presentations to each other, refining their skills and growing in confidence. A-level English language and literature students explain to their peers the meaning of technical terminology such as phonology when describing the pattern of sounds. Consequently, students enjoy attending college and become increasingly confident and resilient.

Students embrace the broad range of programmes and additional activities leaders provide for them with enthusiasm. A very high proportion of students participate in social action and enrichment activities such as volunteering at food banks, undertaking marine conservation projects and learning to cook on a budget. Nearly all students complete useful external work placements or relevant work-related learning. These help students link their classroom learning to the workplace. A high proportion also take part in skills competitions that challenge them to refine and hone their skills. For example, A-level politics students participate in youth parliament debating competitions. As a result, students have exceptional opportunities to develop into well-rounded individuals who become ready to assume a full and active role in society.

Students benefit greatly from the high-quality information, advice and guidance that helps them decide what to do after college. Many visit the numerous higher education and careers fairs that staff provide and that enable them to gain an insight into future work or learning options. Students moving on to university are supported at each stage in the application process. While students planning to progress into employment are helped to write curriculum vitae and develop useful interview skills. Guest speakers from industry and other key stakeholders enable students to acquire a keen understanding of the workplace and its requirements. For example, practising psychologists help A-level psychology students to understand specialisms such as clinical and forensic psychology.

Students feel very safe at college. They rightly value the secure campus that leaders have created. They understand what safeguarding is and how to keep safe while online due to the helpful guidance that staff provide. Most students have an appropriate awareness of the potential risks from radicalisation and extremism in the areas where they study and live. If learners have concerns about their safety or well-being, they are confident that staff will deal with them appropriately and swiftly.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Staff work closely and purposefully with a wide range of highly-relevant stakeholders to understand and respond to local and regional skills needs very effectively.

Leaders liaise with employers and their representative groups, such as Sussex Chamber of Commerce, to acquire a keen appreciation of the current and future skills needs of business. For example, college leaders and governors are actively involved in the Skills East Sussex board that identifies skills gaps and implements strategies to address them. Leaders have established productive employer groups that are aligned to the local skills improvement plan priority areas. These groups ensure that the programmes that leaders offer continue to meet employers' needs.

Leaders involve relevant stakeholders very effectively in the design of the curriculum and how it is taught, ensuring that students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life and work. For instance, A-level history staff work with a local accountant to devise projects, based on funding King Henry VIII's war against France, which enhances students' communication and presentation skills. Following detailed work with the NHS, a highly-experienced nurse supports T-level health students to communicate effectively while completing clinical tasks. Leaders also work with local schools to adapt the ordering of the college tutorial programme to ensure students with high needs settle quickly when they start college.

Leaders have a strong and secure awareness of the contribution they make to meeting skills needs. They frequently review and adapt the programmes they offer to ensure they are aligned to local skills priorities. For instance, leaders rightly recognise the importance of maintaining discrete curriculum pathways into the care and health sectors. Leaders are acutely aware of changes in skills needs and ensure the programmes they offer continue to evolve to meet the dynamic landscape. For example, leaders provide students in physics, computer science and mathematics with additional lectures on artificial intelligence and virtual reality to meet emerging skills needs.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all students, including those in receipt of high needs funding. They use their close understanding of skills needs to provide ambitious programmes of learning that give students the academic, technical and life skills they need to move on to positive destinations successfully. For example, A-level business teachers work with employers to develop students' negotiation and time management skills and enhance their personal resilience. Students quickly acquire the skills and knowledge valued in the workplace and higher education and are prepared well for the future. Consequently, a high proportion of students move on to their intended next steps in learning or work successfully.

Teachers plan students' learning with exceptional care. They think deeply about what students need to learn and the most effective order in which to teach it. They ensure students have a secure understanding of fundamental knowledge and skills before introducing increasingly complex and demanding concepts. Teachers frequently establish links between current and previous learning, enabling students to understand important ideas swiftly. Accordingly, students become increasingly confident and fluent in their recall and application of the knowledge and skills they acquire. For instance, T-level health students apply previous learning about the digestive system when discussing illnesses. Teachers working with students with high needs revisit key topics regularly, ensuring that students understand and retain essential learning. As a result, a very high proportion of students who complete their programme pass their qualifications well.

Teachers apply their expertise skilfully to inspire and motivate students very effectively. They often provide students with projects devised by employers that bring learning to life. For instance, level 3 vocational creative media practice students complete a project designed by the fire service to raise young peoples' awareness of road safety. Accordingly, students deepen their understanding and appreciate the relevance of their learning to the workplace.

Teachers use a wide range of teaching techniques adeptly. They explain topics clearly and initiate interesting and challenging debates in class. They make excellent use of the high-quality, industry-standard resources that are closely aligned to the curriculum. These resources enable students to practise and consolidate their skills in realistic workplace settings. For instance, T-level health students work in a replica hospital ward, practising and refining their technique on electronic, simulated patients. Consequently, students can apply their skills and knowledge in relevant real-life situations.

Most teachers check students' understanding carefully, identifying any misconceptions and taking swift action to close gaps in students' knowledge. Teachers also provide students with feedback that helps them understand what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. For instance, GCSE mathematics teachers check students' recall of previous learning at the beginning of lessons and provide feedback that helps students maximise their marks in examinations. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to provide students with high needs with feedback that enhances their work, including their written English. As a result, the standard of students' work is high and improves over time.

Leaders select the small number of adult learning programmes they offer carefully, aligning them with community needs closely. They work with partners such as Job Centre Plus to identify and resolve adult skills needs. For instance, leaders provide programmes such as English, mathematical and interpersonal skills for adults seeking to progress in the workplace. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of adult students returning to learning. They plan students' learning sensibly and help them acquire new, substantial knowledge very effectively. Accordingly, most adult students

pass their qualifications well. However, too many adult students are not aware of the wider support services, such as counselling and the gym, that the college provides.

Staff have a detailed understanding of the requirements of students with high needs. They put in place support, including assistive technology, that enables high needs students to fully participate in learning and college life. Leaders coordinate therapeutic services very effectively to provide high needs students with the specialist support they require. Staff work closely with employers to provide helpful work placements that are closely aligned to students with high needs goals. This enables these students to practise and consolidate the substantial skills and knowledge they learn in lessons in the workplace. As a result, high needs students make very good progress while at college. Their reliance on others reduces over time and they acquire increasing independence that prepares them well for life after college.

Staff provide learners with plentiful opportunities to broaden their wider skills and knowledge that prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Progress tutors lead well-planned, comprehensive tutorials that develop students' understanding of relevant and important topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion, fundamental British values and what constitutes healthy, appropriate relationships. Teachers often revisit these themes during lessons and engaging displays around the college help consolidate students' retention of essential information. Accordingly, students, including those with high needs, quickly gain the confidence, values and attitudes to contribute positively to society.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and monitor its performance closely. Where they identify an issue, they take swift and decisive action that leads to improvement. They rightly recognised that too many students were not completing their programme successfully. To address this, they implemented a number of sensible actions which are ensuring significantly more students are now retained on their programme. As a result, the quality of the provision is consistently high, and the issues identified by inspectors at the previous inspection have been addressed.

Leaders use their detailed knowledge of the provision to provide helpful development activities that enhance teachers' subject and teaching practice very effectively. For instance, teachers work with colleagues to share their expertise in highly targeted and effective ways. For example, science teachers shared their knowledge of using online polling software to gauge students' opinions with colleagues in English. As a result, the standard of teaching is consistently high across the college.

Governors have relevant expertise and knowledge that they employ skilfully when working with senior staff to set the strategic direction of the college and oversee its operations. Leaders provide governors with ample information that significantly aids their decision making and helps them support and challenge leaders effectively. For instance, governors questioned leaders regarding student attendance, especially in crucial subjects such as GCSE English. Consequently, leaders' actions have resulted

in improved attendance at lessons, including GCSE English. Governors are often linked to activities such as safeguarding and supporting students with SEND, helping governors to maintain awareness of these important areas. Consequently, governors ensure that the college meets its legal responsibilities and continues to develop and improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130670
Address	Penland Road Bexhill-on-Sea East Sussex TN40 2JG
Contact number	01424 214545
Website	www.bexhillcollege.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Karen Hucker
Provider type	Sixth form college
Date of previous inspection	6 to 7 November 2019
Main subcontractors	None

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 visiting 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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