

# South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider.

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	130672
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Sue Hasty, Ofsted Inspector
<b>Inspection dates:</b>	28 and 29 February 2024
<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	Luker Road Southend-on-Sea Essex SS1 2ND

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education was inspected on 29 November to 2 December 2022. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education (SEC) merged with Prospects College of Advanced Technology in February 2019 and with the National College for the Creative Industries in January 2020. The college has six sites, which run along the Thames Estuary. The largest is based in Southend-on-Sea, with other sites in Basildon and Thurrock.

The college provides a broad range of vocational and academic courses for students aged 16 to 18, adults and apprentices. At the time of the monitoring visit, the college had 4,700 students aged 16 to 18. There were 55 students on discrete courses for students in receipt of high needs funding, 2,500 adult students and 700 apprentices.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the college?**

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have taken suitable action to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have put in place extensive professional development to improve teachers' classroom practice. The newly introduced learning platform provides teachers with practical strategies to use in their teaching. For example, leaders signpost teachers to helpful videos on how to use whiteboards in classrooms effectively. Assessors on apprenticeships have benefited from training about how to better prepare apprentices for their final assessment.

Leaders and managers carry out thorough observations of the quality of teaching and learning. They provide teachers with detailed reports that identify development actions. Consequently, most teachers of vocational qualifications continue to improve aspects of their teaching practice. For example, teachers provide students with feedback that helps them improve their work, including developing their knowledge of English. Teachers on health courses use questions effectively to extend students' knowledge. They challenge students to explain why it is important for care workers to show compassion to their clients. Students fluently and confidently answer questions in detail.

A small proportion of teachers do not check sufficiently students' understanding of what they have learned. For example, in mathematics lessons, teachers move on too quickly to the next topic while students continue to talk about the previous question. As a result, students miss out on learning new information.

Leaders have put in place high levels of support for students studying courses at entry level. Students and apprentices who have specific learning difficulties, such as dyscalculia, have additional lessons to help them catch up. In a minority of instances, teachers do not effectively direct the work of learning support assistants. When this happens, students do not receive the support they need in lessons.

Leaders need to make further improvements to the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across all college sites. The proportion of students aged 16 to 18 and apprentices that achieve their qualifications overall remains low.

**How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the curriculum for students in receipt of high needs funding on the discrete programme is suitably personalised, ambitious and involves work-based experience?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders have worked highly effectively to improve the curriculum for students with high needs on discrete programmes. Leaders have introduced a new course that prepares students for the world of work. Teachers plan the curriculum so that students learn topics in an appropriate order. Students first learn how to manage their time and improve their communication skills. They use their improved skills to practise answering questions at mock interviews in preparation for taking up work experience in the community.

Leaders have made rapid progress in identifying students' personal learning goals. Teachers link these appropriately to students' education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes. Teachers set appropriate targets and list the step-by-step actions students need to take to achieve them. Students have a clear understanding of their goals and their progress. For example, when students achieve competency in handling coins, they understand that they will then be set a more challenging target of using banknotes.

Students on the 'Preparation to Independence' course make very good progress in their work. They reflect thoughtfully about how they can achieve their target of being on time for all lessons. At breaktimes, students set their phone alarm to remind them to return to their classroom. As a result, their punctuality at lessons has improved.

Teachers help students to recognise the behaviours they would like to improve, such as reducing the time students spend on social media at home. Consequently, students spend more time together with their families.

Students on supported internships gain valuable work experience with reputable employers, including local hospitals and construction companies. In the hospital, students help with transferring blood samples to different departments and moving equipment around the building. In the previous year, a high proportion of students progressed into employment, on to an apprenticeship, or into voluntary work.

**How much progress have leaders made in providing a well-planned personal development curriculum that supports students' career planning and broadens their knowledge and interests beyond the vocational curriculum, including students' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism at work and in their personal lives?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have taken appropriate steps to develop a range of activities that broaden students' and apprentices' interests. The proportion of students who take part in a wide range of enrichment activities has increased. For example, students join book clubs, organise talent shows and get involved in food banks. Apprentices do not consistently access the resources available to them through the virtual learning platform. They do not recall hearing about the activities on offer.

Leaders and managers have improved the careers advice and guidance available for students and apprentices. Leaders hold careers talks during the college induction week and invite industry experts to talk to groups of students. On media courses, students benefit from hearing about the range of employment opportunities available in the creative and digital media industries. Students on level 2 public services courses volunteer as Army Cadets and Girl Guides outside of college life. This helps them develop useful skills and behaviours such as leadership and teamwork. Most students have a clear understanding of what to do next when their course finishes.

Most apprentices know about the options available to them on completion of their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices on electrical installation courses know they can work on construction sites or as a domestic electrician. They are aware of the additional qualifications they can take to improve their job prospects, such as inspection and testing.

Most students have a sufficient understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They describe in detail the signs that friends may be in danger. For example, students talk about personality changes. They become alert when they see someone using two phones. A small proportion of students on level 2 business courses do not recall how to stay safe online.

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Manchester  
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