

# Inspection of London South East Colleges

Inspection dates: 15 to 18 October 2024

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

## Information about this provider

London South East Colleges (LSEC) is a large general further education college with campuses in Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich, and Lambeth. Bromley campus is the largest, hosting over three fifths of learners aged 16 to 18. Just under half of adult learners study at the Greenwich campus, and the Bexley campus hosts just under half of apprentices. The Lambeth campus is a specialist college for learners with high needs. Learners and apprentices study technical and vocational courses across a very broad range of subject areas and apprenticeship standards. Three quarters of learners study courses at level 2 or below. Leaders offer T-level courses in areas such as business, construction and digital at the Bromley and Bexley campuses.

At the time of the inspection, there were just over 4,100 learners aged 16 to 18, 230 of whom were studying T levels. Approximately 2,300 learners were studying adult learning programmes and there were approximately 600 apprentices. There were just under 800 learners with education, health, and care (EHC) plans. Two fifths of these study at LSEC's Nido Volans centres, which cater for those with high and complex needs. There were approximately 150 care-experienced learners. LSEC works with five subcontractors to complement its offer to young people and adults.

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

Learners, including those with high needs, and apprentices learn in a welcoming and inclusive environment where they feel valued and respected by others. Learners and apprentices work well with others from different backgrounds and cultures to their own, which prepares them well for life and work.

Adult learners develop their confidence and feel comfortable to share ideas and be involved in class discussions without fear of failure. Teachers know their learners well. They quickly recognise when learners need support and provide it effectively, for example clarifying technical terms, so that learners can complete tasks successfully. Overall, the proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications is high, although in a few areas, including distance learning courses, access to higher education and plumbing, it is too low. Leaders have taken positive steps to improve the quality of teaching in these areas.

Through the content of vocational subjects and the tutorial programme for young people, most learners and apprentices develop an understanding of a variety of relevant local and national topics. These include the dangers of knife crime, being safe online, mental health, fundamental British values and understanding harmful sexual behaviour. In a small number of subjects, teachers do not reinforce these topics throughout the course. Learners struggle to relate what they learn to their lives and apply it to their studies. A small proportion of adult learners are not aware of the dangers of extremist beliefs and behaviours.

Learners with high needs studying at the Nido Volans centres practise the useful employability skills and behaviours they learn at college in well-planned work placements with employers who support them well. They attend on time, dress appropriately and ask for help when unsure. They develop good personal and communication skills. For example, learners on supported internships at a local hospital develop the confidence to work competently in teams and speak with suitable assertiveness to patients.

Too many apprentices do not complete their training. Those who stay until the end of their course gain valuable skills, knowledge, and professional behaviours that they apply quickly to their job roles.

Learners and apprentices receive clear and impartial careers advice from their teachers and specialist careers staff. They have a good understanding of possible progression routes into further education, apprenticeships, training, and employment, which helps them to make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

Too many young learners have low rates of attendance to tutorials and lessons in subjects including English, mathematics, carpentry, and business. This results in learners missing key teaching in their vocational subjects. They also miss the important topics covered in tutorials, such as how to apply for jobs and identify local risks. Teachers do not consistently challenge learners who do not arrive to lessons

punctually or ready to learn. These learners do not develop these valuable workplace skills and behaviours.

Learners value the presence of campus support staff and the range of effective security measures in place that make them feel safe while at college. At one of the campuses, a few students' behaviour is not of the same standard as at the others. Incidents of disruptive behaviour in lessons and communal areas occasionally take place. Leaders and managers deal with these incidents swiftly and appropriately and are working to resolve the underlying issues.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Senior leaders work effectively with a range of stakeholders to identify and understand the skills needs of the London sub-region they serve. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable about local skills needs, including those of small and medium enterprises and micro-employers. They work effectively with neighbouring colleges, local authorities, employer representative groups and individual companies to identify the skills needs specific to each curriculum area. For example, staff plan a curriculum that includes the skills required in job vacancies in the local sports industry. They also ensure that business programmes reflect emerging trends and skills required in business. Staff adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as they prepare to enter the workplace.

Senior leaders share their skills and expertise with their strategic partners, such as local further education colleges and local authorities, who recognise leaders' willingness to work with others. For example, leaders have created digital hubs to share the limited number of expert staff in this area with other colleges. They are part of an innovative initiative to build immersive rooms for learners to access teaching from specialist tutors in hard-to-recruit areas from any campus.

Leaders and managers do not involve external stakeholders in planning or teaching the curriculum consistently across curriculum areas. Where they do this well, such as in sport, employers have been involved in planning the content, sequencing, and teaching of practical coaching units. Teachers then make sure that the theory they teach aligns with the practical coaching components. However, in subjects such as digital T level, business, carpentry, plumbing and engineering the involvement of external stakeholders is limited to offering work experience placements, employer visits and generic industry talks.

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

Leaders use their partnerships with employers and their communities effectively to develop curriculums that are relevant to the needs of the local and national economy. Leaders and managers offer a wide range of vocational courses and

apprenticeships to help learners and apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need for their next steps. Learners on the digital T level gain valuable new skills and knowledge that prepare them well for careers in software development and engineering.

In most subjects, teachers plan and structure the curriculum in a way that allows learners to build their knowledge progressively. Learners remember and apply correctly relevant knowledge which they learned earlier on their courses. For example, level 2 business learners use what they have learned about factors that affect businesses to assess the impact of locality in business decision-making. They later recall and build on this knowledge when they apply these same factors to cashflow and finance.

Teachers have suitable expertise in their vocational areas. They use their skills and knowledge of the sectors in which they teach to give clear explanations and to make sure learners and apprentices understand key concepts. Coaches on the level 2 carpentry and joinery apprenticeship adeptly demonstrate alternative techniques to cut hinges, which learners then apply successfully. In the level 2 in supporting teaching and learning in schools, teachers use a useful range of techniques, such as group tasks and discussions, handouts, and mnemonics to help adult learners learn and remember the factors affecting child development.

Teachers support learners and apprentices well to develop their technical vocabulary. Learners and apprentices use terminology that they have learned earlier on their courses fluently and confidently. For example, accountancy apprentices accurately describe the different components of the accounting equation.

Staff assess what learners and apprentices already know and can do at the start of their courses effectively. They use this information to move learners to more appropriate levels of qualification. However, staff do not use this information to adapt their teaching to learners' existing knowledge and skills. This is particularly the case for a small minority of learners on level 1 courses who have prior experience in the trade they are learning. These learners complete the same tasks as their peers which, due to their existing level of skills, are not challenging enough for them.

In most subjects, staff use assessment techniques effectively to identify what learners have learned or do well and what they need to do to improve. For example, in health and social care, teachers use questioning, peer assessment, consolidation activities and scenarios effectively to check that learners have remembered previous content. Most teachers give learners and apprentices helpful and guiding feedback on their work so that they can improve it. For example, entry level ESOL teachers give adult learners constructive feedback on any errors they have made and support them to find the correct answers. This increases learners' independence and confidence as they use their own notes to correct errors. Learners and apprentices, including those with SEND and high needs, produce work of a good standard.

Leaders have effective quality assurance and improvement processes and use these well to work with staff to raise standards. They have increased the proportion of

learners aged 16 to 18 who achieve their qualifications. Most learners achieve their qualifications and move on to further learning, training, or employment. However, the proportion of learners who achieve qualifications in English and mathematics remains too low.

Staff make sure that most learners complete an external work placement or another form of work-related experience that deepens their understanding of their subject. On their placements, learners reinforce what they have learned in lessons, develop good professional behaviours, and learn about future careers. For example, through work placements, level 2 business studies learners become familiar with the range of roles available as routes into employment. They also gain an insight into topics such as corporate social responsibility. They learn about the support that businesses provide to help people overcome barriers to employment, such as related to mental health.

Most learners, including those with high needs, have a good understanding of how to maintain their physical and mental health and lead an active lifestyle. Learners on most courses have the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge beyond their qualification by taking part in a variety of enrichment activities, such as sports clubs, industry-related trips, and community events. However, not enough learners take these on, often due to clashes with other activities or work.

Learners at the Nido Volans centres make good progress in achieving their vocational and personal goals. Most achieve their qualifications and continue to another course at LSEC. Staff plan individualised activities and use appropriate teaching and support strategies, including specialist therapy and assistive technology, that challenge learners appropriately. However, a small number of staff across the vocational areas do not use the useful information and strategies included in learning plans to prepare personalised activities and learning opportunities for learners with EHC plans. This leads to a small minority of learners with high needs not participating well, particularly in group activities.

Governors have good oversight of the quality of teaching and training. Senior leaders update them about the main strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. Leaders and managers have effective processes in place to make sure that the quality of courses, including those taught by subcontractors, meets their expectations. They identify through learning walks and lesson visits early in the year the areas that they want to improve and rightly focus their staff training on these.

Leaders and managers were too slow to identify and respond to issues with the quality of apprenticeships that led to low retention and achievement in this area. They have recently appointed new managers and established detailed processes. They now have an accurate oversight of the progress that apprentices make. Staff identify those at risk of falling behind in time to support them to catch up. Although it is too early to see the full impact of these actions, they have already resulted in a reduction in the number of apprentices who are behind with their studies.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Use the information they gather on what learners know and can do on level 1 courses at the start of their courses to plan and teach challenging content and activities appropriate to learners' existing knowledge and skills.
- Monitor the quality of apprenticeship training and the progress that apprentices make to make sure that apprentices complete their courses and achieve their qualifications in a timely manner.
- Make sure that young learners attend all the components of their programmes well, including English and mathematics lessons, and tutorials.
- Continue to manage the conduct of learners so that across all sites their behaviour is of the high standard expected.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130430
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<b>Contact number</b>	020 8295 7000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lsec.ac.uk">www.lsec.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Dr Sam Parrett CBE
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 to 22 March 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Bromley Football Club Global Skills Learning and Skills Solutions London College of Performing Arts The Skills Network

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive principal and chief learning officer, 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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