

# Suffolk New College

Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 130820  
Name of lead inspector: Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI  
Last day of inspection: 11 December 2009  
Type of provider: General Further Education College  
Address: Rope Walk  
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## Information about the provider

1. Suffolk New College is a large general further education college located in the Education Quarter, Ipswich, part of the Waterfront developments. It serves a wide catchment area in south Suffolk. Since the last inspection, the college, previously Suffolk College has concentrated on further education and re-launched as Suffolk New College, relocating to a new modern college building in July 2009. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds most provision and the Higher Education Funding Council through University Campus Suffolk finances foundation degrees in the built environment. The college provides adult and community learning on behalf of Suffolk LSC. The college offers programmes in all sector subject areas with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care. Around 40% of full-time students are on advanced level provision, 35% on intermediate level and the remainder on foundation level programmes. The largest number of full-time enrolments is in visual, performing arts and media, health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise and engineering. The majority of part-time students study at intermediate and advanced level and the largest number of enrolments are in preparation for life and work, business administration, health public services and care and information and communication technology.
  
2. Ipswich has a low wage economy and some significant areas of deprivation along with a few affluent areas to the east. In 2008, the proportion of school leavers with five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A\* to C in Suffolk was broadly in line with the national average. Around 15% of students at the college are from minority ethnic backgrounds, above that of the local Ipswich population.
  
3. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - WS Training
  - Ipswich Buses
  - Suffolk Police.
  
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
  - Ipswich Town Community Trust Young Learner Provision.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	269 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	2,278 full-time learners 284 part-time learners
Foundation learning	895 full-time learners

	105 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	502 full-time learners 1,038 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	363 learners 241 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	
Health, public services and care	2
Engineering	2
Construction	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Visual, performing arts and media	2
Preparation for life and work	2

## Overall effectiveness

- The college's overall effectiveness and capacity to improve are good. Since the last inspection, a major reorganisation and relocation have taken place, which have been managed effectively. The college has continued to meet the majority of its ambitious targets. Overall students make good progress, enjoy their learning and achieve good outcomes. The quality of provision is good. The teaching and development of students' practical skills are very good, including the use of assessment to improve their progress, although the rate of progress which they make in vocational and theory lessons varies. Outcomes for employer-based provision are good.

6. Students benefit from a broad curriculum, good subject enrichment and the many opportunities available to help them make a positive contribution to the local community. The student parliament provides a strong voice, which the college uses well to direct improvement. Links with employers to support work experience are very good in health, public services and care, but are underdeveloped in other subject areas. Strong, well-established partnerships exist with local schools and external support agencies. The achievement of students aged 14 to 16 is outstanding. The college meets the needs of students with complex learning needs very well. Much pastoral support is good but the quality of tutorials varies including the use of individual learning targets.
7. The college is well led and managed. Curriculum management is particularly strong. Governors are very committed and thoroughly involved in strategic planning. Health and safety and the safeguarding of learners are promoted very effectively. The mostly accurate self-assessment process managers use well to improve provision. However, additional learning support, tutorials and the promotion of healthy lifestyles are insufficiently evaluated and monitored. The promotion of equality and diversity is adequate.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates are high and improving across most levels and ages. Students enjoy learning and attend regularly. Success rates for employer-responsive provision are high although in some subjects such as engineering, not all students complete their qualification in a timely fashion.
- The progress made by students is generally good, particularly for those on GCE A level programmes. However, progress on a few vocational programmes is less marked and it varies by subject. Achievement of high grades is well above average for GCE A level courses and adult students. The development of students' practical skills is good.
- Overall, the performance by different groups of students is good. The college has successfully closed the achievement gap between genders and some minority ethnic groups. Outcomes for those aged 14 to 16 are outstanding. However, overall analysis of performance by different groups is not detailed enough to give it a clear picture about how well all groups are doing.
- Students make a good contribution to the college and local community. Appropriate arrangements to ensure students make informed choices about their own health and well-being are in place; however, the college's promotion of health and well-being is not sufficiently monitored or evaluated to determine its impact on students' lifestyle preferences. Students feel safe in the college environment.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and provide a good range of interesting learning activities, which support the development of students' practical skills very well. Theory lessons are generally

good but are more variable in quality. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge students sufficiently to achieve the progress they could make.

- Assessment is good and makes a significant contribution to students' good progress. The quality of individual learning plans and target setting are improving but frequently do not provide sufficient specific information to help students raise their standards.
- The comprehensive curriculum meets the needs of most students very effectively. Work experience in a minority of subjects is insufficient. Courses meet the needs of vulnerable or disaffected students well and support their progression. Subject enrichment is good and broadens students' personal, social and cultural experiences. Cross-college enrichment activities are adequate.
- A satisfactory tutorial programme supports and ensures regular progress reviews for the majority. However, a minority of students' reviews are late or variable in quality. Some reviews help students make good progress but others are much less effective in helping them reach their full potential. The group tutorial programme is improving in coverage but it varies in quality.
- The provision of additional learning support is satisfactory. Arrangements for the effective deployment of support assistants have improved. They are satisfactory. The monitoring of the quality of additional learning support is insufficient. Its take up and impact is unclear. The college supports its growing number of students with complex learning needs very effectively.
- Leadership and management are good. The college has set and achieved challenging targets for most of its business. College governors have a very clear strategic view of the direction of the college and work tirelessly to promote the college in the local community. Health and safety is well managed and reinforced frequently through practical lessons. Financial and resource management is good.
- The college's self-assessment report is broadly accurate and it has contributed to improvements in learners' outcomes and the quality of their learning. The evaluation of a minority of the college's work is insufficiently developed and action plans lack focus. The college recognises that it needs to engage more with its employers and reflect their views in the development of college provision.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Most groups of students achieve well. Equality themes are increasingly featured through the group tutorial programme but the college accurately identifies monitoring and promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum as an area for improvement.

## What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all aspects of the college's work are monitored and evaluated sufficiently, including additional learning support, tutorial and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, by making sure plans and targets focus sharply on all the

college's work, show targets for achievement and identify clear responsibilities and timescales to allow improved monitoring by senior managers and the governing body.

- Strengthen the promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum by using sharper targets within action plans to emphasise the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum and providing more thorough analysis of performance by different groups, including incorporating a broader range of students within the analysis, such as more vulnerable groups
- Broaden the curriculum for employment-based learners by involving employers in developing programmes of study and promoting the use of work experience to support and improve students' employment prospects. Ensure that the views of employers are reflected more fully in the development of the college's provision.
- Reduce the proportion of less successful theory lessons by improving the quality of lesson planning and sharing good practice more effectively.
- Improve the progress made by students on vocational programmes by continuing to closely monitor the value added data for these courses, improving the value of individual learning plans and individual targets and by ensuring targets are more closely focused on developing students' learning.

#### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

##### What learners like:

- learning in a friendly, relaxed and safe environment
- the good teaching which supports progress
- having a wide range of opportunities and courses
- good resources
- being treated as an individual.

##### What learners would like to see improved:

- a few aspects of advice and guidance
- insufficient space for a minority of learning activities
- lack of quiet areas.

#### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

##### What employers like:

- There were insufficient responses from employers to represent their views.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. Following a significant structural change over the last two years, the college is now focusing strongly on the needs of full-time students. College managers have effectively planned a new college building, on budget and to target. Ambitious targets are set for the college. Success rates have continued to rise and are above average overall. They are high in the majority of curriculum areas. Managers have made good progress in addressing all identified areas for improvement at the last inspection with the exception of the monitoring of additional learning support, which remains insufficient. Governors know the college well and play a strong role in the college's strategic development and vision. Self-assessment is well established and largely accurate. Students' views are used well to improve the quality of provision, although college does not make sufficient use of employers' views. Processes for quality improvement across much of the college's work are good although in a few areas evaluation and monitoring are not effective. The management and deployment of resources is good.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Students' attainment is good. Success rates have increased and are above average at all levels. The rate of increase has generally been in line or faster than that nationally on foundation and advanced courses but slower at intermediate level. The achievement of higher grades is very good for GCE A level and adult students. Key skills success rates have increased markedly to well above average in 2008/09.
10. Overall success rates for apprenticeship programmes are high, although the proportion achieving their qualifications within the agreed time is satisfactory. Outcomes for students on Train to Gain programmes are good and the vast majority achieve their qualifications on time.
11. Students generally make good progress, particularly on A2 courses compared to their starting points. In most lessons students progress was good although on a minority of vocational programmes progress was slower and varied by subject.
12. The college has analysed the performance of different groups of students and accurately concluded that there are no distinct patterns of underperformance by minority ethnic groups. Success rates of the statistically largest ethnic groups of White Other and Mixed White/Caribbean were in line with the high overall college average. The difference in performance of students by gender has reduced and it is no longer significant. Outcomes for students aged 14 to 16 are outstanding, with the majority progressing successfully onto full-time courses at the college. Overall success rates for students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities are at least in line or better than that of



their peers. The college's analysis of the performance of other different groups of students, including those in receipt of learning support and other vulnerable groups, is insufficient and does not provide the college with enough information to make a secure evaluation.

13. Students enjoy their learning, achieve well and feel safe in the college environment. Full-time attendance is high and improving. The standard of students' work is very good, particularly in practical subjects. The development of students' economic and social well-being is adequate. Progression between levels of study is generally good and many students progress successfully on to higher education or full-time employment or training.
14. Students make informed choices about their health and well-being. Healthy food options are becoming increasingly available and the students' union and group tutorials promote well sexual and general health matters. However, the college does not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of this work in order to better target its future promotion and information. Students make a good contribution to the college and wider community through a wide range of charitable events and community projects. The extensive course representative structure and student parliament enable many learners to contribute their ideas and represent the views of their peers effectively.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and provide a good range of interesting learning activities designed to maintain students' interest and enjoyment. In the majority of lessons these activities enable students to work at a level and pace which is appropriate to them and their progress is generally good. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about the subjects they teach. Their energy and specialist knowledge, together with the excellent resources available, help students to develop very good levels of practical skills. Teachers make good use of ILT to enliven lessons and to develop and extend learning. The use made of the college's recently established virtual learning environment varies between curriculum areas but is proving effective where teachers have been suitably trained and are confident with the new technology. Theory lessons are generally good, and sometimes inspirational, but are more variable in quality than practical lessons. In the minority of less successful lessons a combination of teachers' low expectations and over-reliance on low-level learning skills, such as copying and lengthy periods of listening slow the pace of learning and students make insufficient progress. Students speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers, both in lessons and in the range of 'booster' classes and other out-of-hours activities designed to improve their progress.
16. Assessment is good and makes a significant contribution to the progress that students make. Work is marked carefully; students say, and inspectors agree, that the detailed comments teachers provide help them to improve their standards. Vocational assignments are designed carefully to reflect industry

requirements and provide students with good opportunities to demonstrate their competence. Assessment practices for apprentices in the workplace are good; the college has improved the arrangements which help apprentices to complete their qualifications within the agreed time. Individual learning plans provide a useful mechanism to track students' progress but the majority do not provide sufficient specific information about their next steps in learning. Target setting has improved, particularly for advanced level work where detailed analysis of prior achievement is helping teachers to set challenging targets. However, in many other areas, targets relate to meeting deadlines rather than to improving performance.

17. The arrangements for initial assessment identify accurately the additional learning support needs. The support which is provided in lessons is satisfactory but the college recognises that its quality varies between curriculum areas and is, as a matter of priority, taking appropriate steps to encourage greater consistency.
18. The college's curriculum is broad and comprehensive for full-time students. Recent curriculum developments, especially at foundation and intermediate level, ensure a better match between students' ability and interests and their course of study, and have improved retention and attendance. The curriculum promotes progression between levels and modes of study successfully. Particularly effective developments are in place to meet the needs of vulnerable students, including those with moderate or complex learning needs, and for those with significant barriers to learning. The curriculum for employment-based learners is limited but it is growing following marked improvement in the quality of existing provision.
19. Most enrichment activities are subject-based and popular and support students' personal and social development. The work experience is underdeveloped in a several areas but it is very productive in others. Key skills tuition links effectively to each subject area and meets students' needs and interests effectively, as shown by the improved success rates for these qualifications.
20. The partnerships with schools and the local community are strong and beneficial in promoting social and educational inclusion. Partnerships with employers are much less developed but these are benefiting from several recent initiatives to work with industry partners.
21. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The pre-course and induction information, advice and guidance provided for students is comprehensive and effective in helping them to settle into their courses. However, information materials are not easily accessible for all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Strong links with specialist agencies and external support services ensure a very broad range of students can attend college courses. Specialist expertise is used wisely and productively to help them succeed.

22. The tutorial programme in most subjects, specialist advisers and the Connexions service provide effective careers guidance. Most students feel well prepared for their next steps in education or employment. The work to support progression to higher education has increased the number of students moving to university.
23. The tutorial programme provides satisfactory support for learning. Individual and group tutorials vary in quality. A majority of students receive frequent progress reviews and valuable pastoral support through individual tutorials, but a minority receive less frequent useful support. The quality of group and individual tutorials is mostly satisfactory; a few are of good quality. Too little monitoring takes place to ensure consistently good provision across all subjects. The promotion of equality and diversity through the group tutorial programme is at an early stage.
24. The provision of additional learning support based on effective initial assessment is satisfactory. However, the deployment of learning support assistants is not always effective and monitoring and evaluation of the take up and impact of support on achievement is insufficient.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

25. Since the last inspection, the college has undergone a major period of change in which it has moved to a new building and realigned its business by withdrawing from higher education provision and concentrating on increasing the opportunities for full-time students. The principal and his senior leadership team have led the college successfully through this period whilst ensuring that students' achievements have continued to improve and that challenging institutional targets have been set, and largely met. The principal's vision has been developed and shared with staff at all levels so that the college has a very clear sense of purpose and a strong commitment to raising standards still further.
26. Governors were fully involved with developing the new strategic direction, which they endorse completely. Governors know the college well, provide critical support and operate within a secure framework for governance. They monitor most aspects of college business well and have ensured that the college has retained a secure financial position during its redevelopment.
27. The college's main planning documents provide satisfactory coverage of the college's work but frequently do not provide enough detail to enable senior managers and governors to monitor and evaluate improvements easily. Important aspects of the college's work which have been identified as requiring improvement, including the effectiveness of group tutorials and the quality of individual learning plans and targets have not been evaluated rigorously enough, reducing the effectiveness of subsequent improvement planning.

Procedures to provide management information to support evaluation and planning are in a few cases underdeveloped.

28. Curriculum management is strong; quality improvement practice within curriculum areas is well considered and it works well. Curriculum managers have taken appropriate action where course performance has been unsatisfactory to improve standards markedly.
29. Arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching and learning at course level are comprehensive and support the broadly accurate self-assessment judgements.
30. Managers give a high priority to the promotion of safeguarding and ensure that systems meet legislative requirements. The college has very good relationships with external agencies involved with protection. It has established clear and speedy referral mechanisms. Staff at all levels in the organisation have received training in safeguarding and are fully aware of their own responsibilities. Students are encouraged strongly to report any issues which make them feel uncomfortable and say how much they value the college's intolerance of bullying and harassment. The college records all incidents carefully and takes swift action when necessary.
31. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The profile of equality and diversity has increased notably across the college. Routine coverage of equality themes takes place through group tutorials, which staff use to promote discussion and raise awareness with students. Students report they feel they are treated with respect and they value the inclusive college environment. The college has recently created a centre for diversity to support local businesses in achieving a nationally recognised diversity award. However, the promotion of equality and diversity through lessons, tutorials and other curriculum activities is inconsistent and monitoring is insufficient. The college's gender, race and disability schemes are in place but the subsequent implementation plans are not adequately monitored, contain insufficiently sharp targets or consistently clear actions to enable managers and governors to measure effectively the impact of the college's work. There is little significant difference between the achievement of most groups of students. However, it is difficult to determine exactly how much of the narrowing of achievement gaps is through planned actions of managers. The college analyses and reports on the performance of different groups of students through self-assessment but its analysis is insufficient in its depth to enable managers to identify all patterns of performance by every group.
32. The college is good at gathering and listening to students' views. Students are well represented on the governing body and on college committees. The student parliament has a high profile in the college; senior managers take its recommendations seriously and, where possible, incorporate them into the working life of the college. The college recognises that it needs to engage more thoroughly with employers and reflect their views in the development of

provision. In construction and hairdressing and beauty therapy, the lack of work experience reduces students' enjoyment of their courses.

33. The use of resources to secure value for money is good. Financial management and procurement practices are strong and the management of resources is efficient. Teaching staff either possess, or are working towards achieving, an appropriate teaching qualification. Accommodation is very good, although increasing enrolments on a few courses is beginning to place a strain on resources.

## Subject areas

### Health, public services and care

Grade 2

#### Context

34. A range of long and short vocational courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels are available, which are both learner and employer responsive. Most of the 602 full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and female. Of those aged 16 to 18, 116 follow courses in health and social care, 203 in children's care, learning and development and 85 in uniformed public services. Most adult students follow part-time, employer responsive courses under the Train to Gain scheme. Short courses include first aid and food hygiene.

#### Key Findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates are high on most full-time courses. Success rates on all three levels of childcare courses are consistently high. Success rates are very high for students aged 14 to 16 and employer responsive provision. Students and employers are highly satisfied. Students' work is of a high standard.
- Success rates for the courses in uniformed public services are at a satisfactory level, mainly due to low retention. Success rates for the advanced course in health and social care fell starkly in 2008/09 to below average. In both subjects, students do not always make the progress expected of them.
- Progression to higher-level courses is good. Students who are returning to learning or those who did not succeed at school achieve very well and many progress successfully onto their chosen destination.
- Teaching and learning are good. Carefully planned lessons provide good levels of challenge and pace to support learning. In most lessons, thorough questioning consolidates students' understanding. The use of interactive whiteboards is effective in most lessons. A good range of learning activities helps students with different learning styles to succeed.
- A broad range of vocational courses meets students and employers' needs very well. Curriculum enrichment courses and opportunities are good and improve students' employability. Students benefit from many enrichment opportunities including guest speakers, visits and charity fund-raising all directly related to their vocational specialism. Supplementary courses, which employers' value greatly are included in students' programmes of learning.
- Partnership working to improve students' experience is highly effective. Full-time students in health and social care and childcare courses develop good vocational skills through well-planned work placements. The support given by placement officers and teachers to students in the workplace is excellent. Employer feedback confirms the high effectiveness of placements and NVOs in the workplace.

- Overall, students receive good care, guidance and support. All students are closely monitored and individual pastoral support is excellent. Students value the regular individual tutorials to set and monitor targets. However, some target setting is not focussed sufficiently on raising students' academic success. Although most assignment instructions are clear, a minority of students, particularly on advanced programmes, receive insufficient help with the organisation of their academic work.
- Leadership and management are good. Quality assurance procedures are robust and monitoring of course and students' development is helping to improve progress. A behaviour policy, implemented this year has improved students' attendance. Consultation with learners and employers is helping to improve outcomes.
- Procedures for the safeguarding of students and its coverage in the curriculum are very good. Health and safety has a high priority in all courses. Most lessons include well-directed and sensitive discussion on tackling these issues to underline their importance to students. Placement officers provide vulnerable students with individual guidelines and strategies to use.

What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention and achievement on advanced courses in health and social care and uniformed public services by giving students on these courses more support with the scheduling of their assignments and the organisation of their academic work.
- Ensure all students achieve their academic potential by making sure all targets are challenging and use clear and specific academic goals.

## Engineering

## Grade 2

### Context

35. The college offers courses in motor vehicle maintenance, body repair, motor cycle maintenance and electronic/electrical engineering at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Some 337 students are on full-time courses, the majority are aged 16 to 18. A further 76 are on part-time courses and 20 aged 14 to 16 from local schools are following increased flexibility programmes in engineering. The number of work-based apprentices is 54 and 18 learners are on Train to Gain programmes.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The success rates on foundation and intermediate full-time motor vehicle courses are outstanding. Success rates on the motor vehicle national diploma have declined over the last three years and are low.
- The overall success rate for motor vehicle apprentices in 2008/09 was high. This was a substantial increase on the two previous years. The progress of most work-based learners is slow. In 2008/09, only 45% of the motor vehicle apprenticeship learners and 18% of the electrical installation apprenticeship learners completed their programmes by the planned end date.
- Students and work-based learners develop good industrial skills mostly through practical lessons at college and in the workplace for apprentices. The good quality of work emphasises their confidence and ability to achieve appropriate vocational skills on full-time courses. Most apprentices work with minimum supervision. Students and learners are aware of their responsibilities toward health and safety and apply safe practices well.
- Teaching and learning are good. The very effective use of the high quality teaching resources develops and enhances students and learners' skills. Teachers make very good use of their vocational experience and relate lessons well to activities in the workplace. Students and learners respond positively when challenged with new concepts and work effectively both individually and in groups to complete complex tasks.
- Work-based assessment is good. It is thorough and effectively includes health and safety. Feedback to learners is comprehensive and identifies future areas for improvement. Staff discuss with employers further relevant work to aid learners' progress through to the NVQ.
- Additional learning support is satisfactory. Staff use initial assessment to set suitable targets for literacy and numeracy, but they do not use the information sufficiently to develop students and learners' skills. In practical lessons, experienced workshop technicians are used well to provide additional support for learners.



- A broad range of motor vehicle craft courses are available ranging from foundation to advanced level. New courses include intermediate motor cycle and vehicle body repair and at foundation level an electrical course. Substantial plans exist for advanced level courses in vehicle body and motor cycle repair for 2010.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Identification of students and learners at risk of not completing their programme is swift and they receive good support to help them achieve. However, there are no formal individual tutorials to allow students less confident to discuss issues or personal needs relevant to them on a regular basis.
- Leadership and management are good. Teaching rooms and facilities are very well-resourced with good quality, industry standard equipment. Staff are very positive and promote high standards.
- The management of work-based learning is satisfactory. Appropriate action is in place to reduce the number of work-based learners not completing by their planned end date through a reorganisation of the apprenticeship programme.
- The reinforcement of equality and diversity to work-based learners during their progress reviews is insufficient. Teachers satisfactorily check if learners have been harassed or bullied but they do not test or extend learners' knowledge of equality and diversity themes.

What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the completion of qualifications by the planned end date of apprentices by continuing to implement the recent changes to the apprenticeship programmes including more frequent and thorough monitoring of learners' progress.
- Reinforce and raise awareness of equality and diversity for work-based learners by the better use of resources and improved questioning of learners at reviews on this area.
- Improve the pastoral support for students aged 16 to 18 by ensuring all receive individual tutorials and through thorough monitoring of their effectiveness.

## Construction

## Grade 3

### Context

36. Full-time and part-time learner responsive courses are available at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. They cover brickwork, wood occupations decorative occupations and mechanical services. Some 115 students are at foundation level, 148 at intermediate level and 73 at advanced level. Around 70% are aged 16 to 18. Thirty pupils aged 14 to 16 follow increased flexibility programmes in construction. Most students follow full-time programmes. Twenty learners are construction apprentices. The college provides training and assessment for apprentices on programmes through construction skills.

### Key Findings

- Success rates are at a satisfactory level. They increased in 2008/09 from the inadequate performance of previous years, when most were substantially below the national average. Success rates are high in basic plumbing and at a satisfactory level on the construction diploma and on advanced level furniture production. Success rates are low on the mechanical services NVQ and the intermediate furniture production courses.
- Students make good progress in practical lessons, developing high standard vocational skills. The reinforcement of safe working practices is good. A culture of responsibility and awareness has been developed which encourages and enables students to take accountability for their own and others safety in workshops.
- Engagement in enrichment and access to activities which inform health and well-being and students' contribution to the community is now satisfactory after the introduction this year of the group tutorial programme. Full-time programmes have scheduled sessions covering job search, interview techniques and CV production. A minority of students participate in sporting activities, through or supported by the college.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students are mature and positive in practical lessons. The teaching of practical lessons is better than that of theory. A minority of theory lessons lack imagination and challenge, and have little student participation. A few students make little or no progress as a result of the lack of a strategy for dealing with, or integrating those late to lessons.
- In the current academic year, progression to advanced level in brickwork, wood occupations and painting and decorating is limited and only available to apprentices. There are firm plans however to provide appropriate progression opportunities for students in these three areas
- Engagement with employers is insufficient. Although examples of individual links and initiatives with employers are in place to provide employment and work experience for a few learners, arrangements to enable the high numbers of full-time learners following technical certificates to undertake work-

placements or gain employment to enable them to achieve industry recognised qualifications is insufficient.

- Individual pastoral and academic support for students is good. Students understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to achieve. Not all students receive individual tutorials. Individuals can request pastoral tutorials but appointments are not made with all students. Recording of individual targets is variable.
- Leadership and management have improved since the college restructure and are satisfactory. The new leadership team has overseen the consistent implementation of college programme review, quality improvement and self-assessment processes. Internal communication has improved and staff are now clear about their responsibilities.
- Good leadership and challenge from a link governor assists in the validation of the self-assessment report and the monitoring of progress towards achieving improvement targets in the action plan. Managers now routinely share performance data with staff to use in programme reviews and target setting.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in most lessons is satisfactory including some good examples of equality and diversity issues raised in lessons. Students value the inclusive environment. The college has taken positive steps to increase the numbers of traditionally under-represented students into construction courses, particularly in painting and decorating.

What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- To provide more opportunities for full-time students to engage in work placements or obtain employment, supporting them to obtain industry recognised NVQ qualifications and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) licence to practice, by engaging routinely and effectively with local construction employers.
- Ensure high levels of student success by ensuring more robust monitoring and performance management of programmes and teaching and learner support strategies.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing more challenge and a greater variety of learning activities in theory lessons.
- Ensure that progression opportunities are in place for intermediate level students by ensuring plans for advanced level options take place.
- Improve the personal support for students aged 16 to 18 by providing individual tutorials for all and by monitoring their effectiveness.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 2

### Context

37. The majority of students follow full-time NVQ programmes with holistic therapies courses offered on a part-time basis. Most students are female. Of the 417 students enrolled to the area, 146 attend courses in hairdressing, 178 in beauty therapy and 93 in holistic therapies from foundation to advanced level. The majority of students study full-time and are aged 16 to 18. A further 24 learners aged 14 to 16 are studying hairdressing at foundation level and attend two days a week.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high on beauty therapy and very high for holistic therapies. The success rates on the intermediate hairdressing course are at a satisfactory level but declined by 10 percentage points in 2008/09.
- The development of students' practical skills in hairdressing and beauty therapy is good. Students enjoy their learning and undertake treatments within commercial timescales and develop good customer care and team working skills which equips them well for employment. Students commented that they would like the opportunity for more work experience.
- Students feel safe at the college and welcome the identification badge scheme that restricts entry by other students to their subject rooms. Teachers reinforce health and safety, and safe working practise in all practical sessions.
- Students are involved in a wide range of extracurricular activities that extend their hairdressing and beauty therapy knowledge and skills including events, competition work and promotional activities. Students are involved in many community projects such as working with refugees, a drug rehabilitation project, cancer charities, special schools and fund raising events.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teaching of practical lessons is a particular strength. Well planned learning activities enable students to participate thoroughly in lessons. The variety, creativity and challenge in practical lessons teachers do not develop to the same extent in theory lessons. In these, students play a less active role and teachers miss opportunities to stretch and extend their learning.
- The planning and review of students' progress is good. Arrangements for assessment helps students achieve units of work incrementally. Feedback from teachers is constructive and they monitor students' progress regularly at individual reviews. In a few instances, students do not have sufficient clients in practical sessions.
- Students receive good support from teachers in lessons. Teachers monitor attendance well and attendance rates have improved in the current year.

- The range of courses is appropriate although not all optional units are available to students. Internal progression in beauty therapy and from foundation level hairdressing is good. However, progression from intermediate hairdressing is low.
- Equipment is of a high industry standard and electronic whiteboards are in all rooms. Teachers use ILT but the standard is variable. For example, teachers made very good use of ILT for revision and bringing fun into learning but it was at its least effective when students copied from electronic presentations.
- The self-assessment report is self-critical, largely accurate and leads to improvement. Actions taken by curriculum staff have improved the teaching and learning, the timely completion of assessments and the approach to responding to students' views. Staff act on the views of students.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers have taken effective action to increase success rates to above national average through setting challenging targets at course level and applying rigorous monitoring procedures. Teachers are clearly aware of targets for improvement. Teachers share an ethos of high achievement, which they convey effectively to students.

What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the retention of students on the NVQ intermediate hairdressing course through closer monitoring at individual reviews.
- Raise the standard of theory lessons by developing a challenging, wider and more varied range of learning activities that will engage students, particularly by using the good practice and creative approaches found in practical lessons.
- Increase progression opportunities to advanced level programmes by strengthening careers guidance and through encouraging students to improve their skills development for future employment.

## Visual, performing arts and media

Grade 2

### Context

38. Some 641 students are full-time and 1,419 part-time (leisure learning). Most study on full-time vocational courses which include an introductory diploma in art and design, first and national diplomas in art and design, music, media and performing arts and a foundation diploma in art and design. The college offers a range of creative leisure courses. Additional courses, including GCE A levels, are available to full-time students to improve their main programme of study. Some 83% of full-time students are aged 16 to 18.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high on almost all full-time courses. However, success rates are low on intermediate art and design and intermediate music programmes. The achievement of high grades on advanced courses is very good. Key skills success rates declined in 2008/09 to a broadly satisfactory level. Students make very good progress on the advanced music course.
- In most lessons, students' creative practical work is of a high standard. Art and design students develop very good visual language through their sketchbooks. Experimental use of a wide range of materials in textiles builds upon their use. The development of vocal technique and characterisation in singing is outstanding.
- Progression within the college and to higher education is good. Most students move from introductory to intermediate courses and then to advanced levels within the college. A high proportion of students from the national diploma and foundation diploma courses progress successfully to higher education.
- Students feel safe and secure and are confident they know what to do and who to go to if they have concerns. The reinforcement of health and safety within lessons in workshops and studios is strong.
- Students make a positive contribution to the community through extensive live shows and performances. Performing arts students present performances featuring social issues including domestic abuse, peer pressure and teenage pregnancy. Students are involved in many charity fundraising activities. They are involved in decision-making at forums and through the student parliament and have been instrumental in improving services and facilities.
- Teaching and learning are good. A minority of teaching is highly imaginative. Teachers plan lessons carefully and learning resources are produced to a high standard. The wide range of teaching and learning styles enables students to use their initiative and make good progress. Teachers are highly experienced practitioners and passionate about their subjects.

- A few lessons fail to engage all students when teachers' expectations are too low and their questioning is undemanding. Opportunities for students to critique each other's work and gain confidence in sharing their views are missing. The level of learning support is adequate and promptly provided. Most lessons include planned learning support for those needing help.
- Frequent individual verbal feedback helps students meet short-term targets set at tutorial reviews, mostly for course assessment. Much written feedback gives students clear ideas on how to improve. However, the quality of formative assessment feedback is inconsistent at intermediate level. Formal target setting is too late in the first term for a few students and not clearly understood.
- Partnership working is strong and greatly benefits students' learning experience. Exhibiting artists, designers and performers contribute effectively to contextual studies programmes. Music students compose for external clients as part of their course work. Links with Ipswich Town Football Club allow media students to write match reports alongside journalists and attend press conferences.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Teachers identify, recognise and adequately promote different cultures and their impact on Western cultures in course assignments. They draw upon a wide range of artists, performers and music to extend students' experience, break down preconceptions and respect differences.
- Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and used well to direct improvement. All teachers take part in voluntary peer observations and benefit from the feedback of close colleagues. Formal observations however focus insufficiently on the learning and progress made by all students.
- Accommodation for media and music is excellent and include radio and TV studios. Industry standard equipment and software is available to all, however rehearsal spaces for group work in performing arts are too small. Lessons in painting take place in an unsuitable area shared with ceramics and the printmaking room will only accommodate a few students.

#### What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates of students on intermediate courses by clearly identifying in written feedback exactly what they need to do to improve, ensuring students understand and work towards clear targets and make sure that the setting and monitoring of these targets are timely.
- Engage all students in their learning through ensuring all lessons are planned carefully with an appropriate range of learning activities which maintain students' interest and build on their knowledge including the use of more demanding questioning.
- Improve the restrictions in accommodation on vocational courses in performing arts, printmaking and painting by reviewing timetabling arrangements and room relocation.

## Preparation for Life and work

## Grade 2

### Context

39. Of the 1,368 students, 57% are aged 16 to 18. Discreet literacy and numeracy programmes, at entry to intermediate level have 354 students and 136 GCSE mathematics and /or English. Some 133 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) study on full-time and part-time courses. The remaining enrolments are to key skills qualifications at foundation or intermediate level in application of number, communications and information and communication technology.

### Key Findings

- Outcomes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good overall. Success rates for discrete literacy and numeracy are very high and are high for key skills at foundation level. Students are keen, interested and enjoy their learning. Most students, within lessons make good progress and achieve well.
- Success rates for most intermediate key skills qualifications and for GCSE mathematics and English are broadly average, although the proportion of students gaining high grades of A\* to C in these GCSE subjects is well above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. In most lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching interventions and good quality written, pictorial and e-learning materials to provide learning. The use of electronic whiteboards is very effective and supports students' progress well.
- Whilst there are some examples of specific and measurable individual learner targets, mostly in behaviour plans, for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the quality is not consistent. The self-assessment report accurately identifies that further work is required to embed the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA).
- In a few lessons, opportunities are insufficient to involve students in developing skills in solving problems in literacy, numeracy and problem. When opportunities do arise, teachers are sometimes too hasty to respond to their own questions and so do not give students enough time to think and reply for themselves.
- The range of courses available is appropriate to meet the needs of most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who seek literacy and numeracy courses. Good opportunities for vocational tasters exist for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to develop their work-related skills, although opportunities for formal work experience are limited.
- The college has developed very effective support for students with complex requirements across the autistic spectrum and with mental health needs. This



follows a comprehensive assessment process to highlight levels of skills and support requirements. All students are thoroughly involved in developing their own learning plans and targets, which staff frequently review.

- Additional learning support in lessons for students with more profound learning difficulties is good. Learning support assistants act as effective catalysts to involve reluctant students, by prompting their thoughts and encouraging them to contribute to discussions.
- Specialist support and counselling for students with a wide range of disabilities and complex conditions are good. The creation of a "Cool Room" in which students can have time-out is proving successful in providing a quick and effective return to learning.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are thoroughly involved in the community and make a very positive contribution. They help raise funds for local charities by involvement in enterprise activities such as growing vegetables, making cards and t-shirts. Innovative and imaginative use of telephone technology supports students' independent use of roads and public transport.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Managers and staff use self-assessment well to improve provision.

What does Suffolk New College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of individual learning targets by providing training to assist staff in developing specific and measurable targets in a language that can be understood and remembered by students and through encouraging regular and overt use of the targets in lessons to help students develop a sense of achievement and independent learning.
- Develop students' literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills within lessons by establishing specific training within the department to encourage teachers to develop these skills in students through a wider and more creative range of activities.

## Information about the inspection

40. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
41. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Suffolk New College**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	4196	167	3114	511	404
Part-time learners	1626	0	283	1343	0
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	1	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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