

# Epping Forest College

Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 130677

Name of lead inspector: Lindsay Hebditch HMI

Last day of inspection: 19 March 2010

Type of provider: General Further Education College

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## Information about the provider

1. Epping Forest College is a medium sized general further education college in West Essex. It is located close to the towns of Debden and Loughton but also recruits from economically and socially deprived East London boroughs including Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Newham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets. In September 2008, the college moved into its new campus, which was built alongside the old buildings. The college has experienced a period of instability at senior management level with three principals in a relatively short period. At present, the college has an interim acting principal with plans for a permanent principal appointment for the summer of 2010.
2. The college provides courses in 14 subject areas, mostly from entry level to advanced level, with the majority of learners following courses at intermediate level and advanced level. The largest provision is in arts, media and publishing, foundations for learning and life and business, administration and law. Most full-time learners are aged 16 to 18 and most part-time learners are adults. More than two hundred pupils from local schools attend the college as part of their Key Stage 4 programme.
3. Some 33% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage, above the proportion in the local population. Almost half the students aged 16 to 18 and nearly one-fifth of adult learners live in areas of high economic disadvantage. Unemployment rates in the Epping Forest District are lower than average but are higher in the East London Boroughs, particularly for people of minority ethnic heritage. The number of Year 11 pupils who achieve five A\*-C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, in Essex is lower than the national average.
4. All provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Essex was covered by the inspection, and four subject areas, health and social care, visual arts and media, literacy and numeracy and business and administration were inspected in depth.
5. The college was inspected in December 2008 and its overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards and leadership and management were inadequate. The quality of provision was satisfactory. Of the six subject areas inspected, one was good, three were satisfactory and two were inadequate.
6. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Essex County Council
  - Apex Consortium
  - North London Garages

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16	282 part-time learners
Further education (16 to18)	1,686 full-time learners 156 part-time learners
Foundation learning, including	318 full-time learners 27 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	185 full-time learners 869 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	103 learners 24 apprentices

## Summary report

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

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

Subject Areas	Grade
Health and social care	3
Visual arts and media	2
Literacy and numeracy	3
Business and administration	3

## Overall effectiveness

7. The college has recovered well since its previous inspection when overall effectiveness was judged inadequate. The majority of its provision is now satisfactory, and improving. Staff morale is high and the majority of learners work hard and are happy. Outcomes improved significantly in 2008/09 and were satisfactory, although learners on AS- and A-level programmes do not make as much progress as they should. There are no significant differences between the outcomes of learners from different minority ethnic backgrounds. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with the best lessons inspiring learners to do well. Lessons, which do not reach this high standard, fail to capture learners' interest sufficiently and progress is much slower. The college provides a satisfactory range of courses and is developing increasingly productive working relationships with local schools. Engagement with employers is at an early stage of development. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, but with particularly effective support for learners with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities who flourish in the college's inclusive environment and make good progress.

8. Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. The Interim Principal motivates staff well, and together with her able senior management team, has stimulated most of the improvements in the college. The strengthened governing body now operates within a structure for governance that enables them to concentrate on monitoring the performance of the college more effectively. The promotion of equality and diversity enjoys a high profile in the college; learners demonstrate mutual respect and make a significant contribution to the relaxed, yet industrious, atmosphere. New quality improvement procedures are becoming increasingly effective but variations in the quality of outcomes and teaching and learning within and between subject areas persist.

## Main findings

- Success rates have increased and are now at a satisfactory level but are much higher in some subject areas than others. Retention rates have increased substantially but achievement rates show only a modest increase since the last inspection. Learners develop good specialist skills, which equip them well for their future education and employment.
- Learners on AS- and A-level programmes make insufficient progress; the most able learners do not achieve the high grades they are capable of attaining. Learners say, and inspectors agree, that their progress is slower and attendance lower, in subjects, which do not capture their interest.
- The college has been successful in ensuring that there are no major differences between the success rates of different groups of learners. There are no significant differences in performance between learners grouped according to their gender or ethnic heritage. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress, which is often better than that of other learners.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are most effective when teachers provide a range of different activities to stimulate learning and maintain learners' interest. Less successful lessons are dominated by the repetition of routine tasks and often fail to provide sufficient challenge to the most able learners.
- Teachers have good access to information learning technology (ILT) but do not make sufficient use of it to enliven lessons or help learners develop new skills. The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is underused; many staff do not have the appropriate skills to develop e-learning further.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory. The assessment of learners' progress is mostly accurate but the monitoring of learner performance varies. Learners' targets are detailed and specific on some courses, but on others they are vague and do not provide learners with sufficient information about what their next steps in learning should be.

- The college offers a satisfactory range of courses and sufficient opportunities for progression. Most subject areas provide a good range of enrichment activities but the participation rates in enrichment are often low.
- Partnership working is satisfactory. The college's arrangements for collaborating with its education partners and community groups have improved and are now good. Liaison with local employers is insufficiently developed.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners with specific learning needs receive highly effective support, which helps them make good progress. Tutorial arrangements have been revised substantially and are now effective.
- The Interim Principal has guided the college skilfully through a period of rapid development in the college during which standards and morale have improved.
- The governing body has been strengthened since the last inspection and now operates within a secure framework for governance. Governors demonstrate a strong commitment to the college and monitor its performance carefully.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college provides a harmonious environment in which learners of all backgrounds are encouraged to do their best and fulfil their potential. Learners feel safe at the college and generally behave well.
- The implementation of new, carefully considered quality improvement procedures has taken place quickly but significant variations in the quality of provision within and between curriculum areas persist.

### What does Epping Forest College need to do to improve further?

- Identify the best features of AS- and A-level provision and develop them in all subjects, in order to help learners achieve higher grades and make better progress.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by providing a greater variety of learning activities and making lessons more interesting.
- Agree and implement an action plan in each subject area to develop teachers' skills in the use of e-learning and ILT so that they can increase the use of learning technology in lessons and make more imaginative use of the VLE.
- Improve the quality of assessment and monitoring of learners' progress by ensuring the identification of appropriate learning targets for learners in all subject areas and that progress reviews are held more frequently.
- Develop links with local employers so that the college's provision addresses the training needs of local employers and learners are provided with more opportunities for work experience.
- Reduce the inconsistencies in the quality of curriculum management and course performance still further by ensuring that new procedures for self-assessment, quality improvement and performance management are applied rigorously in all subject areas.

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

### What learners like:

- the relaxed, friendly atmosphere and attractive social space
- the high quality buildings and safe environment
- being treated as an adult
- the college's strong focus on achievement
- the ease of travel to and from the college
- the friendly and helpful tutors.

### What learners would like to see improved:

- the frequency of individual tutorials
- the guidance on progression to higher education (HE)
- clearer explanations about how to improve their work
- a minority of lessons which do not hold their interest
- the system for ensuring that computers are available when they need them.

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

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

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. The college has made good progress from a low base since the last inspection. The majority of provision is now satisfactory, and improving. The Interim Principal has brought considerable energy and fresh ideas to the college and staff morale and motivation are high. Governance has been strengthened and is now satisfactory. The commitment to continued improvement is strong and widespread. The college has been successful in rectifying the majority of the specific areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, with particularly impressive progress in increasing success rates, the promotion of equality and diversity and the clarity of the college's strategic direction. In a few areas, including employer engagement, little improvement has been made. The action to strengthen senior and middle management has been decisive but the quality of curriculum management remains inconsistent. College targets are challenging and are mostly met but this is not the case in all curriculum areas. At college level self-assessment is accurate and action planning reliable. However, within curriculum areas, course reviews and self-assessment are not sufficiently rigorous. Data, which could support self-assessment in curriculum areas, are accurate, but not always used to best effect. The views of learners are under represented in quality improvement procedures. The pace of change has been rapid in the college; improvements have been well considered but it is too early to assess the impact of many of the most recent actions.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

10. Success rates have increased on courses at all levels since the last inspection and are now close to the average. Retention rates have increased substantially, and college data for the current year indicate that the increase has been maintained. Increases in achievement rates have been modest for learners aged 16 to 18, whilst for adult learners the overall achievement rate declined slightly in 2008/09. However, the college's own data provide an early indication of improvements in achievement for the current year. Learners mostly make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and develop good levels of specific vocational skills. However, in most AS- and A-level subjects learners, and in particular the more able learners, do not make as much progress as they should. Fewer learners achieve high grades in AS- and A-level subjects than on vocational courses. Learners aged 14 to 16 make satisfactory progress.
11. The college has been successful in ensuring that there are no significant differences in the success rates of different groups of learners. The success rates of learners from different ethnic heritages are similar and there is no significant difference between the outcomes of male and female learners. Learners who find learning difficult receive highly effective support so that they achieve at least as well, and often better, than other learners.

12. Variations in outcomes are wide for learners on different courses and in different subjects. Learners say, and inspectors agree, that this reflects differences in the quality of curriculum provision. The majority of learners say they enjoy their time at college; their attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. However, many AS- and A-level students say that they enjoy some of their subjects much more than others and this is reflected in their attendance. The development of economic and social-well being is satisfactory. Learners achieve satisfactory outcomes in key skills, demonstrating that they are improving their standards of literacy and numeracy appropriately. However, the college knows that too few learners have opportunities to undertake work experience. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good skills in handling money and in craft technologies, which help them prepare for future independent living. Learners say they feel safe in the college; they understand and practise mutual respect so that incidents of bullying and discrimination are rare. Learners generally adopt safe working practices in lessons. The college provides a wide range of information on health and well-being but although most learners make suitable efforts to eat healthily, few take advantage of the opportunities to participate in sports activities. Learners make a satisfactory contribution to the community, particularly through fundraising for local and national charities.

## The quality of provision

Grade 3

13. Inspectors judged the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory, which is the same as the college's judgement in its self-assessment report. The proportion of lessons, which are good or better has increased since the last inspection but the quality of lessons varies across subject areas and course levels. The best lessons are planned well, provide a good range of interesting activities and provide frequent checks to ensure that learning is taking place. When lessons contain these three elements, the progress made by learners is generally good. However, in a significant minority of lessons, teaching is dull and uninspiring, learners find it difficult to maintain their interest and their progress suffers. In AS- and A-level lessons the over-reliance on text-based information, insufficient consideration of how learners learn best and lack of challenge for the most able learners results in a much higher proportion of lessons, which are satisfactory, or inadequate, than in lessons on other courses. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT in lessons. Many teachers do not have sufficient skills to use ILT effectively and the use of the college's VLE to support learning is at an early stage of development.
14. Initial and diagnostic assessments provide a reliable basis for identifying learners' additional learning needs and the provision for literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. The vast majority of learners identified as requiring learning support take it up; these learners achieve higher success rates than learners who do not receive additional support.
15. The assessment of learners' practical skills and coursework is satisfactory and compliant with awarding body requirements. Most work is marked accurately

but some teachers provide more detail for learners on how they could improve their work than others. The college has made a number of changes to its arrangements for monitoring learners' progress, including the use of on-line learning plans and the introduction of progress review weeks. However, the college knows that the effectiveness of these arrangements varies across subject areas. Sometimes learner targets are precise and sharply focused on improvement, but in other cases targets are vague and of little value to teachers or learners in monitoring and assessing the progress learners have made. The use of target minimum grades is at an early stage of development.

16. Provision to meet users' needs is satisfactory. The college offers a satisfactory range of vocational courses and an appropriate choice of AS- and A-level subjects. Progression between courses at different levels and into HE is satisfactory. The college provides a central programme of enrichment activities, which it supplements by more specialist courses in different subject areas. The range of enrichment activities is good but timetabling constraints mean that participation is often low. Insufficient learners have opportunities to undertake work experience.
17. Partnership working is satisfactory. The college has developed a more productive range of partnerships with other local education providers since the last inspection but acknowledges in its self-assessment report that there are insufficient links with local employers.
18. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The college provides an effective range of printed marketing materials and is developing its use of the internet to provide a better service to learners who wish to receive information by this means. Much improved arrangements for enrolment and induction ensure that learners are now placed on an appropriate course. Tutorial arrangements have improved since the last inspection and in the majority of subject areas are helping to ensure that learners are retained, and are successful on their chosen course.
19. The college has good arrangements for helping learners with specific needs and communicates effectively with external agencies when required to provide specialist support. Learners value this support and make good progress. Over half of the college's learners receive an education maintenance allowance and the procedures for the distribution of the allowances are managed sensitively and well. Arrangements for providing information about progression into employment or HE are satisfactory, although inspectors found that a minority of learners felt that guidance on how to make HE applications could be improved.

## Leadership and management

Grade 3

20. The Interim Principal, ably supported by her senior management team, has acted decisively and effectively to motivate staff and address the many areas needing improvement following the previous inspection. From a low base, senior managers have led the college to a position where the bulk of provision

is now satisfactory and continuing to improve. Challenging college targets are set, and largely met. The culture of the college has changed; morale is high and the focus on raising standards is much stronger. This is reflected in the wholehearted support that staff give to the college's new values and strategic aims. However, the improvements are not yet complete. Strategies for developing the curriculum and income diversification are insufficiently developed and the quality of curriculum management remains too variable. Weak co-ordination of AS- and A-level provision has allowed significant differences in performance between different subjects to continue for too long. The college is well aware of these issues and has taken appropriate actions, including the appointment of section leaders to support the five curriculum managers and the implementation of an extensive management development programme to remedy them. However, it is too early to judge the impact of many of the college's recent initiatives.

21. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has been strengthened since the last inspection and now brings a high level and range of expertise to its work in the college. The changes in committee arrangements ensure governors can devote more time to monitoring college performance. The board has a satisfactory gender balance, but its ethnic mix is not sufficiently representative of the learner population.
22. The promotion of safeguarding is satisfactory. The college has updated policies and has carried out relevant checks of all staff, volunteers and governors. The single central record of these checks is comprehensive and up-to-date. Five designated staff and a designated governor have received training to level 2 in safeguarding, but the college has been slow in getting all staff trained to level 1. Risk assessments are now thorough and learners display a good appreciation of health and safety. Excellent security arrangements help to ensure learners feel safe and relaxed on campus.
23. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The racially diverse learner population thrives socially in the inclusive and harmonious college environment. Equality and diversity are celebrated widely through cross-college events and highlighted in striking display materials throughout the college. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are integrated well into college life and enjoy a good level of interaction with other learners. The college has prioritised equality and diversity in its staff development activities and inspectors found that teachers were introducing themes, which they had covered in their training well in the planning and conduct of their lessons. Learner equality and diversity 'champions' act as mentors to other learners and also assist in the development of collaborative projects with local schools.
24. The college attracts substantial numbers of learners from minority ethnic groups and uses data well to monitor and analyse the performance of different groups of learners. Success rates are consistent; groups, which were performing less well at the time of the last inspection, including learners of Black Caribbean and Black African origin, now achieve success rates which are comparable to those of other learners.

25. The college has an appropriate single equalities scheme and associated action plans but impact measures are currently too narrow in scope and sometimes superficial. Procedures for dealing with complaints work well and in most cases result in the speedy resolution of issues.
26. Arrangements for learners to contribute their views and promote improvement are satisfactory. Learners have good opportunities to express their views through participation in focus groups and college committees. Student representatives from most full-time courses meet regularly with curriculum managers. Learner surveys have a high response rate and their outcomes are taken seriously by senior managers, but there are insufficient opportunities for employers to influence the work of the college.
27. The college's arrangements for quality improvement and self-assessment are satisfactory. The college has revised its quality improvement procedures since the last inspection and although some significant variations in the quality of provision persist, the proportion of underperforming courses has been reduced and standards overall are improving. At college level, self-assessment reports are largely accurate and action plans provide useful quality improvement tools. However, at curriculum level, self-assessment lacks consistency and rigour. The involvement of learners and other stakeholders in self-assessment is at an early stage of development and although management information is reliable, it is not being analysed sufficiently within curriculum areas to identify accurately where improvements are needed or monitor progress towards achieving them. Course review procedures are stronger but targets for improved course performance are not set consistently in all curriculum areas.
28. The college's new arrangements for unannounced lesson observations provide a reliable measure of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development activities are matched closely to the outcomes of lesson observations and are proving effective in reducing areas of inadequate teaching whilst raising the overall quality of teaching and learning. Plans are in place to share good practice more effectively within and between curriculum areas.
29. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Success rates are satisfactory and improving. Financial management and control are satisfactory; a balanced budget is forecast for next year following a series of deficit budgets. Accommodation is good and the deployment of resources is efficient, although the college is too dependent on teachers with fractional contracts. The few teachers without a teaching qualification are working towards achieving one.

## Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 3

### Context

30. The college offers mostly full-time courses in health and social care and childcare. Of the 312 learners currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 46 are adults, 263 are aged 16 to 18 and three are aged 14 to 16. Some 289 learners follow full-time courses of which 18 are studying at foundation level, 76 at intermediate level and 195 at advanced level.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates have increased since the previous inspection. Achievement rates are high, with a substantial proportion of learners on advanced level courses achieving high grades. Retention is satisfactory, but improving. Learners enjoy their learning and their achievements are celebrated widely. They develop their knowledge and understanding well and demonstrate good practical caring skills.
- Learners make good improvements to their economic and social well-being. Their behaviour in lessons is very good and their attendance is satisfactory. Learners work well in teams, displaying respect for each other and providing strong mutual support. Progression into employment and HE is very good.
- Learners feel safe in the college and appreciate the safety and security measures that are in place. They have a good understanding of health and safety and are careful to adopt safe working practices, both in the college and whilst on placement. Safety is emphasised in lessons and promoted very well through classroom displays. The promotion of health and well-being is strong.
- Learners make a good contribution to the community. They plan, promote and participate in a wide range of fund raising events for local and national charities. One group of learners worked with a local primary school to improve their school dinners, helping the school to achieve a 'healthy eating' award.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan well, emphasising the links between their theory lessons and the practical experience of learners in the workplace. In the best lessons, learners are given good opportunities to work independently but in a minority teachers do not make sufficient use of information about the learning needs of individual learners to inform their lesson planning.
- The range of provision is satisfactory. The range of full-time vocational courses is appropriate and opportunities for learners to develop their skills in a satisfactory variety of work placement settings are sufficient.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral and academic tutors provide good support for learners who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Pre-course entry procedures have been improved and are mostly satisfactory.

Learners on advanced level courses have a good awareness of their career and HE options and receive sufficient support in making their career choices.

- Leadership and management are good. Actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been successful and supported well by carefully targeted staff development activities. Lesson observations have been used well to identify and share features of good teaching.
- Safeguarding is good. All teachers have attended relevant training and have a very good understanding of how to deal with any safeguarding issues which may arise.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Teachers place a strong emphasis on equality and diversity issues in their lessons. Learners enjoy the inclusive culture of the college and feel valued within it.
- Arrangements for class cover during staff absence are inadequate. Learners say that they are not always informed about what they should do if their teacher is absent; sometimes learners are allowed to stay at home rather than attend college. When learners attend sessions taught by supply teachers they often repeat subjects they have already covered.

What does Epping Forest College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention still further by ensuring that all learners are placed on an appropriate course and receive an effective induction programme.
- Make more effective use of information on learners' specific needs when planning lessons and selecting learning activities.
- Improve class cover arrangements by devising a clear cover procedure and implementing it consistently. Ensure that schemes of work and lesson plans are readily available for staff to share and identify teachers who will be available to cover should staff absence occur.

## Art, design and media

## Grade 2

### Context

31. The college offers mostly full-time courses in art, design and media. Of the 553 learners currently enrolled, 86 are adults and 467 are aged 16 to 18. Some 485 learners follow full-time courses of which 19 are studying at foundation level, 66 at intermediate level and 400 at advanced level.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good and have improved since the last inspection. Success rates are high and advanced level learners generally achieve grades which are higher than those predicted, based on their prior attainment.
- Learners' practical work is good. Photography learners produce high quality digital images whilst graphic and media learners produce creative posters exploring text and image. Art learners produce highly imaginative drawings, paintings and artefacts. Learners on all courses evaluate their work regularly and articulate confidently their ideas and creative plans.
- Learners develop good practical skills. Media learners design highly creative web-pages and edit images using basic and advanced web-design software. Learners use a wide range of modern technologies, including industry-standard information technology and digital filming equipment, to develop skills, which will help them gain employment within the sector.
- Learners feel well cared for and safe. They respect one another, and their teachers, and their behaviour is good. Learners demonstrate a good awareness of health and safety and adopt safe working practices when in workshops and studios.
- Learners make a positive contribution to the community. Media learners produce video documentaries, which are used by the local fire and rescue services, whilst art learners provide large-scale paintings to enliven local community spaces.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned; teachers ensure that theoretical and contextual learning are integrated carefully into practical work. Learners have good opportunities to develop their own ideas and to share and reflect on those of others. A minority of learning activities are not organised this effectively, particularly when more able learners do not receive sufficiently challenging activities and consequently work at too slow a pace. Learning support in class is good.
- Assessment procedures are reliable. Work is marked carefully and accurately. Project themes are stimulating and encourage learners to take creative risks, explore issues of equality, and learn about artistic influences from a range of cultures. However, individual projects frequently last too long, reducing the opportunities for more able learners to achieve their intended targets as quickly as they could.

- The college provides a good range of courses and appropriate progression routes between them. The good range of enrichment activities includes cross-disciplinary projects that encourage learners to work with learners from other subject areas. The curriculum area organises a wide range of trips and visits, but some AS- and A-level learners are unable to participate because of timetable constraints.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Initial assessment is effective and ensures that learners are on an appropriate course. Learners receive good specialist advice and guidance but the reviewing and recording of their short-term learning goals are not systematic.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers set high standards and provide realistic, yet challenging, targets for further improvement. Communication and teamwork are good and morale is high.

What does name of Epping Forest College need to do to improve further?

- Provide activities with greater challenge for more able learners by extending the range of learning activities, particularly in relation to the development of more experimental work.
- Review the duration of projects and tasks to ensure learners have sufficient opportunities for early achievement.
- Improve the opportunities for learners to reflect on their own practice by recording short-term learning targets more effectively.

## Literacy and numeracy

## Grade 3

### Context

32. The college offers full-time and part-time courses from entry level to intermediate level in literacy and numeracy. Of the 258 learners currently enrolled, 33 are aged 16 to 18 and 225 are adults. Full-time learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities study literacy and numeracy within their programmes. Some 1,870 learners are studying for key skills qualifications of which 1,784 are aged 16 to 18. The college also provides in-class and individual support for literacy and numeracy. Provision for speakers of other languages (ESOL) was not inspected.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates have increased on most courses since the previous inspection, and substantially in key skills, but remain very low on level 2 courses for adults. Progression to other courses from 'Skills for Life' provision is low.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities demonstrate good social and employability skills. They develop money handling and customer care skills through running a college shop and interact regularly with other college learners during enrichment activities such as drama and gym practice. However, learners are not developing the ICT skills required for higher level study, employment and social inclusion.
- The promotion of health and well-being for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good; course activities include healthy cooking and physical fitness. Teachers draw learners' attention to displays in classrooms and corridors promoting healthy living and they quote frequently from these when responding to questions in class.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but a minority of learning sessions are good or better. Most course planning is good, with learning activities based on detailed initial assessment and tailored to meet the needs of individual learners. However, in many learning sessions learners have insufficient opportunities to work in groups or pairs to compare and exchange their ideas.
- Assessment is satisfactory overall but feedback from key skills assessments does not always provide sufficient information to help learners improve their work.
- The range of provision is satisfactory. Full-time courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities provide good opportunities to build on their knowledge and skills. The range of enrichment activities is good, but they do not always meet the needs of learners on preparation for life and work courses.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Support workers and volunteers in most classes are sufficient. Actions to improve attendance, including the

introduction of more flexible learning programmes for part-time learners have been successful. Both attendance and retention have improved and are now satisfactory.

- The quality of target setting varies considerably. In provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, targets are precise and realistic but in 'Skills for Life' provision, most learner targets are insufficiently specific or measurable to provide evidence of progress. Closer monitoring of learners' progress in key skills has supported improvements in achievement.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordination of key skills provision has improved significantly and the new manager has identified clearly the priorities for improvement in the current year, including the more effective use of data on learner performance. Self-assessment is satisfactory; the self-assessment report identifies accurately most strengths and areas for improvement but takes insufficient account of the views of learners.
- The promotion of safeguarding and equality and diversity is good. Younger learners are encouraged constantly to question their assumptions based on gender, age and disability. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved actively in college-wide activities and play a full part in college life. Posters promoting equality and diversity and safeguarding are displayed prominently in all classrooms.

What does Epping Forest College need to do to improve further?

- Improve learners' personal and employability skills by developing their use of ICT for study, work and social interaction.
- Raise the standard of teaching and learning by increasing the range of class activities to include more group and pair working and sharing good practice in target setting.
- Improve the effectiveness of curriculum management by ensuring that teamwork is strengthened, focuses sharply on what needs to be done to improve provision, and how to do it.

## Business and administration

## Grade 3

### Context

33. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in business and administration from foundation level to higher level. Of the 547 learners currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 431 are aged 16 to 18 and 116 are adults. Some 443 learners follow full-time courses and 104 following part-time courses. In total 67 learners are at foundation level, 206 learners at intermediate level, 259 learners at advanced level and 15 learners at higher level. Some 39 learners are on the Train to Gain programme, working as clerical assistants or in customer service.

### Key findings

- Outcomes vary considerably between courses but are satisfactory overall. Success rates are high on the introductory diploma in business, the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) certificate for legal secretaries; AS- and A-level law and Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) level 2 accounts. The success rate and high-grade achievement are very low on AS-level business studies.
- Learners at all levels demonstrate good levels of skill in using information technology (IT); learners on secretarial courses in particular use IT effectively in business-related tasks. Role-play on the AAT full-time course equips learners well with the practical skills they need for employment. Learning resources are good.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical and workshop sessions are busy and well run. Learning sessions for learners on advanced level courses in business and secretarial subjects are often dull and uninspiring. In a significant minority of learning sessions, learners lack concentration and do not make as much progress as they should.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory and work is marked fairly. Assignments require learners to demonstrate a good range of skills but their responses rely too heavily on information obtained from websites.
- Provision meets the needs of full-time learners well but links with local industry are insufficient. Few learners on business and accounting courses have the opportunity to undertake work experience.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory but support in class for foundation level learners with specific learning difficulties is good. Attendance is satisfactory on most courses but low on AS- and A-level business studies.
- The system for monitoring learners' progress is satisfactory, although the process of online reporting by subject teachers to pastoral tutors is not fully embedded.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new curriculum manager has put in place a realistic programme of improvements, but many of these have

yet to have an impact on standards and quality. Course reviews are imprecise and do not yet provide a secure basis for staff teams to monitor progress and plan for improvement.

What does Epping Forest College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of lessons through the more effective sharing of good practice so that learners, particularly on advanced level courses, are encouraged to attend more regularly and make better progress.
- Forge stronger links with local industry to create more opportunities for curriculum enrichment and work experience for learners.
- Ensure that curriculum teams develop further their understanding of quality assurance processes in order to monitor progress and plan for improvement more effectively.

## Information about the inspection

34. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's vice-principal, as nominee, carried out the re-inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 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.
35. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners 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)**  
**Epping Forest 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	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	1049	156	869
Part-time learners	2256	1686	185
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do learners progress?	3		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3		
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	3		
Quality of provision	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
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?	3		

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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