

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

General further education college

Inspection dates		11–15 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Students aged 16 to 18 on foundation level courses do not achieve their qualifications as well as their peers at similar colleges nationally.
- Success rates for intermediate apprentices aged 16 to 18 have declined and are below the national average.
- While the proportion of students remaining on their courses is increasing, it is below that for similar colleges nationally.
- The proportion of good or better lessons is not high enough across the college, leading to too many students not achieving their full potential.
- Too many students do not attend or arrive late at their functional skills lessons leading to low levels of achievements.
- The sharing of good practice in equality and diversity is insufficient across the college resulting in teachers not routinely broadening students' understanding of this area in lessons.

This provider has the following strengths:

- The large majority of students develop good practical vocational skills to meet employers' needs.
- Advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18 and adult apprentices achieve well.
- Managers and staff thoroughly promote improvement throughout the college.
- Good strategic planning is responsive to the needs of students and regional stakeholders and partners.
- Staff provide good support for students with complex and sensory support needs.
- Teachers and students have high levels of mutual respect for each other in lessons and throughout the college.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of good or better lessons by:
 - the regular use of initial assessment information to plan for each student's needs
 - ensuring more able students receive sufficient challenge to achieve their potential
 - planning learning activities that develop students' independent thinking and problem solving skills
 - using information learning technologies (ILT) to support learning in and outside the classroom
 - ensuring feedback to students on assessed work informs them how they can improve further
 - teachers routinely developing students' English and mathematical skills during lessons
 - sharing good practice across the college more widely between teachers and through strengthening the links and communications between teachers and learning support assistants to provide support that is more effective.
- Further develop work experience for students on vocational courses to meet the skills needs of employers.
- Ensure students and apprentices receive regular reviews of their progress and ensure targets have sufficient detail to help them improve and achieve their potential.
- Raise the attendance and punctuality of students in functional skills lessons.
- Evaluate the recently introduced arrangements to improve staff performance.
- Raise students and apprentices' awareness of equality and diversity during lessons and training.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Success rates on substantial courses have remained at the same level for the last three years. Success rates for those working towards advanced level qualifications have increased in this period. The number of adults achieving intermediate level qualifications is above average, but the success rates for adults at foundation and advanced level have declined since 2011/12 to below that for similar colleges. Students aged 16 to 18 on foundation courses achieve significantly below those at similar colleges.
- Advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18 and adult apprentices achieve well and above the national average. Apprenticeship outcomes overall have declined and are below the national average across a large majority of the provision and require improvement. Apprentices currently on programme are progressing well.
- The proportion of students who remain on their courses requires improvement. Too few students on substantial courses, with the exception of adult students on intermediate programmes, stay on programme. However, managers have recently introduced strategies to increase the students remaining on their course and this has started to resolve this issue. In 2013/14, compared with the same period in 2012/13, more students remained on course.
- Student attendance is improving and it is particularly high in early years and play work, visual arts and administration. However, the number of students attending lessons in foundation English requires improvement and in a few lessons, they arrive late.
- Staff have worked well to close gaps in achievement. No significant gaps exist between men and women, or between minority ethnic groups and white British students. However, the

performance of students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities, other than those with sensory and complex needs, is lower than that for other students, particularly for those with emotional, behavioural and mental health support needs. Managers have substantive plans to provide training for staff to resolve this problem.

- Most students successfully acquire good, up-to-date vocational skills which employers value. For example, nail art students develop good practical skills early in their course. Hospitality students acquire highly effective practical, personal learning and thinking skills in the colleges' training kitchens that employers need.
- Students develop good personal and employability skills by taking part in social, recreational, volunteering and sports activities as part of a comprehensive enrichment programme. Insufficient work experience stops students building on these skills. Student services staff promote a variety of activities for students. Students participate well in sport to help them become healthier.
- The introduction of an employment agency and awarding body partnerships has improved the career prospects for learners at foundation level. Guest speakers and visits to employers effectively raise students' awareness of the skills required by employers.
- Students' achievements in functional skills in English and mathematics are declining and they are below the national average. However, a new functional skills team for 2013/14 are improving students' English and mathematics skills in subject areas. Students speak highly of this initiative and value the development of these skills to reinforce their vocational studies. It is too early to measure the impact of these changes.
- The number of students progressing within the college to a higher level needs improving. Around half of foundation and intermediate level students left the college in 2012/13 to continue their studies elsewhere or gain employment. Just over two fifths continue to train or study at the college or elsewhere. The majority of advanced level students progress into employment or higher education.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. This reflects students' outcomes which, although having improved slightly in 2012/13 to broadly around the national averages for similar colleges, remain below average for foundation level learners and for those studying functional skills in English and mathematics.
- Teachers and trainers have higher expectations of their students and apprentices than at the last inspection. They have a stronger focus on the quality of learning. Learning coaches work closely with teaching teams to identify students at risk of leaving or underachieving. The support they provide is raising attendance and more students remain on their courses than at the same time last year.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers provide carefully planned, enjoyable and stimulating learning that matches well students' individual needs. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and make good links to work and higher education. Teachers and trainers measure students' and apprentices' knowledge and skills frequently to check understanding before moving on, using questioning skilfully to probe and deepen learning.
- Teachers develop students' vocational and employment skills well in good or better lessons. For example, visual art students develop high-standard portfolios, painting and decorating students hang wallpaper to a professional level and hospitality students produce and serve food in the college's restaurant and cafes to a high standard.
- A minority of lessons requires improvement. In these lessons, as at the last inspection, teachers do not plan sufficiently well to meet students' individual needs. They do not use readily available information on students' starting points and target grades to plan learning effectively.

Teachers talk too much, students are not thoroughly involved in learning, and the more able do not receive sufficient challenge to reach their potential.

- Leaders and managers have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning and the actions they need to take to raise standards. Advanced practitioners are having a positive impact on supporting most teachers to improve through good coaching, mentoring and support.
- Teachers do not use ICT sufficiently effectively in lessons and the development of the virtual learning environment (VLE) is at an early stage. The VLE has plenty of interesting and interactive learning materials in areas such as games design and in art, but no material is available for learners in most other subject areas. This restricts access to learning resources outside of lessons and training to extend students’ and apprentices’ skills and knowledge.
- Staff put in place promptly good specific support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning support assistants, who support students with sensory or complex needs, work closely and effectively with teachers to ensure these students make the progress of which they are capable. However, teachers and general learning support assistants do not always communicate well. Consequently, students receive ineffective support.
- Assessment is mostly good and meets awarding body requirements. Actions by managers and staff to spread assignments over the college year have been successful. While the best assessments focus well on work-related projects, the less effective require students to produce tasks that do not stretch them sufficiently well to achieve at high grades. Feedback on assessed work does not always provide students with guidance on how to improve and teachers do not routinely identify spelling and grammar errors. Apprentices are not always aware of how staff will assess them.
- Teachers’ increasing use of the new on-line tracking system, to record and monitor progress, is resulting in more timely identification of students’ concerns. Consequently, teachers act more quickly to provide appropriate support than previously. The quality of students and apprentices’ targets varies. Most are too broad and not helpful in providing specific direction to help students improve further. Apprentices’ reviews and reviews of progress for those students in subcontractor provision do not contain sufficient detail to enable them to improve effectively, other than in business administration.
- English and mathematics’ skills in lessons are improving and learners appreciate the importance of developing these skills. However, attendance remains low in a minority of functional skills lessons. Students develop useful functional skills in construction and beauty therapy. For example, in a building services lesson, teachers developed students’ high-level mathematics skills at a fast pace at the same time as maintaining their interest and extending their vocational knowledge. Not all vocational teachers develop functional skills routinely in their lessons.
- Learners receive appropriate advice and guidance to ensure they are on the most appropriate course. Most students receive timely guidance on progression opportunities. Staff do not promote apprenticeships well to broaden students’ possible progression routes.
- Students are very respectful to each other, in lessons and in the college’s social areas. Teachers and assessors do not routinely broaden students and apprentices’ awareness of other cultures or groups to prepare them well for employment and their experiences in the wider society.

Health and social care and early years and play work

**16-19 study programmes
Apprenticeships**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as reflected by the variable outcomes for students, which are broadly around the national average. Students' success rates declined in 2011/12 on the advanced diploma, access and apprenticeship programmes. Students enjoy their studies and make adequate progress. Adult students on access to health professional programmes gain good study skills enabling them to progress confidently to higher education. College-based students develop appropriate employability skills. Apprentices reflect on their progress and improve their professional practice.
- Teachers and assessors are well qualified and use their industry experience and expertise to improve learning. For example in a lesson for advanced early years students, a teacher highlighted specific requirements for completing risk assessments, this enabled students to develop their knowledge of safeguarding young children when planning creative or outdoor activities. Visiting speakers from the private and public sector improve students' understanding and awareness of specialist roles and responsibilities across the health, social care and early years workforce well.
- In good or better lessons, students enjoy a variety of tasks, explore topics in small groups and demonstrate their ability to work effectively in a team. Lively debates broaden students' understanding of how best to support future clients or children. Students draw on life and work experiences well to develop their knowledge and skill to make good progress.
- In the less effective lessons, the pace is too slow and students lose interest. This results in them making limited progress to achieve their individual targets. Teachers do not routinely use all available information on students to plan teaching and assessment to challenge the more able.
- Students on the second year advanced health and social care programme and those on early years programmes benefit well from placements in the private and public sector. However, not all students have sufficient opportunities to develop employability skills through planned work experience.
- Teachers do not use technology sufficiently to promote and extend learning. Teachers and assessors do not routinely improve learning by the use of ILT or short video clips to reinforce key points. In particular, those on early-years programmes do not have the opportunity to develop confidence and competence in the use of interactive white boards which staff in the sector frequently use.
- Most written feedback on students' assessed work needs improving. It contains insufficient detail on how students can improve, gain higher grades and make good progress. Too few teachers correct spelling and grammar in student work. However, students on access programmes value the detailed and constructive feedback they receive to enable them to improve.
- Initial advice and guidance are adequate and ensure students study the correct programme and level to achieve their career goals. Students receive good advice and guidance to help them prepare for employment or progression to further and higher levels of study. Initial assessment identifies support needs accurately. However, teachers do not plan well enough to enable learning support assistants to meet individual needs in lessons.
- Teachers promote English well in lessons including the correct use of specific terms for the health, social care and early years sectors. An innovative activity in an intermediate level lesson led students to complete successfully a word search around the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. Students appreciated the importance of correct spelling and presentation when planning wall displays and leaflets to celebrate the festival in the workplace. Students benefit from attending English and mathematics lessons, but the promotion of mathematics is insufficient in vocational lessons.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Students recognise the importance of valuing individual differences. However, a minority of teachers and assessors do not have sufficient up-to-date knowledge. As a result, students are not always aware of correct

terminology, legislation, the rich and diverse communities they live and work in, and the implications for their professional practice.

Building services and construction crafts

16-19 study programmes

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as reflected in students' success rates which are below those for similar colleges. Teachers work enthusiastically with students and encourage them to greater efforts, but most do not set high enough expectations. Teachers often fail to provide suitably challenging activities to help all students learn effectively.
- Teachers plan lessons adequately, but few plan learning to meet individual students' needs sufficiently well. In better lessons, teachers use a range of teaching and learning activities which engage students thoroughly. The pace is brisk and students participate well, making good progress. For example, in a construction technician lesson, students talked confidently about the thermal insulation properties of building materials and their application in construction projects. In practical lessons, teachers make good use of challenging targets which students attempt to achieve. Students develop a good understanding of health and safety, which prepares them well to work in the construction industry.
- Teachers talk too much in too many theory lessons. Students are passive and are not actively engaged in their learning. A minority of students arrive late for lessons and this often disrupts the learning of others.
- Teachers' use of ILT with students is not sufficiently well developed. Only a minority use ILT to improve their presentations. Students on technician courses and carpentry and joinery regularly use ILT to support their learning, but its use in other craft areas is not strong.
- Assessment of students' abilities and the monitoring of their progress require improvement. Timely initial assessment is in place, but too many students decline the offer of additional support and do not make the progress expected. Students' levels of literacy and numeracy, together with information from initial assessment, do not inform lesson planning sufficiently well.
- Most assessment in the workplace is accurate, reliable and frequent. Apprentices' individual targets are mostly good and show clearly what they need to do to improve and to progress. Workplace assessors provide highly individual support which has improved most apprentices' progress. In a minority of instances, assessors do not regularly carry out reviews of apprentices' progress and do not provide enough detail to inform apprentices about the next stage of assessment. Feedback to students does not always enable them to understand how they can improve further.
- Most students develop relevant applied mathematics skills in practical lessons. For example during a foundation level bricklaying lesson, students had to calculate the quantities of materials to construct a brick and block cavity wall. The standard of written work for a minority of craft students is low and attendance at functional skills lessons is also low. In the past managers and staff have been slow to organise apprentices' functional skills lessons. This has delayed apprentices studying English and mathematics. Managers and staff have resolved this problem.
- Since the last inspection, managers and staff have improved initial advice and guidance. A more rigorous interview process ensures students are on the right course and this is reducing the number of early leavers. Students are able to sample a range of construction taster programmes to support their choices. In construction technician studies, teachers prepare

students well for the move to higher education. However, craft students have no planned work experience to help develop their vocational skills.

- Teachers' promotion of equality and diversity is under-developed. Lesson plans do not indicate how teachers are going to cover this area. Consequently, college-based students do not receive tuition on the cultural diversity within their chosen industry. Assessors and apprentices have equality and diversity discussions as part of the review process. However, this does not lead to the development of greater awareness of cultural diversity or how this affects apprentices' working lives.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Success rates have increased and are now high on most courses except on the beauty specialist diploma. Teachers have good vocational knowledge and experience, which enable students to develop very good employability and commercial skills.
- The availability of clients is good. Students develop a variety of techniques on clients such as long hair techniques, colouring and nail art. This helps students gain professional skills and learn how to provide different hairdressing and beauty therapy services for customers confidently.
- Students value teachers input and their caring approach which supports them particularly well in practical sessions. Most lessons have a good pace which keeps students focused and engaged in work tasks. Students develop more advanced skills in cutting, colouring and body massage which prepare them well for employment in the industry. Teachers use questioning effectively to check learning, but they do not always involve all learners.
- Teachers' planning of learning in a few theory lessons is weak. Teachers do not routinely plan to meet all students' needs and abilities. Students in these lessons do not make sufficient progress in developing their understanding of their subject and improve their skills to work independently.
- The beauty therapy salons at Southend have modern commercial standards. Salons at the other college campuses meet the needs of the students well. However in an external hairdressing salon the lack privacy for clients and students, and noise from other students and teachers is distracting for both clients and students.
- Staff plan assessments well. Students have access to a wide variety of tasks to ensure they can work independently and improve their employability skills. Most students receive well written feedback after assessment to improve their progress. However, teachers in a few external hairdressing and beauty therapy salons only give students verbal feedback. This arrangement does not help students to remember what they have to improve.
- Group tutorials are good. Tutors introduce topics such as anti-bullying which students relate to well. Students share their experiences and build positive working relationships through conversations regarding previous experiences of bullying. Tutors discuss with students well the dangers of internet bullying and explain how students can stay safe while completing research for their hairdressing and beauty therapy studies on-line.
- Students take part in and attend very useful exhibitions, competitions and educational visits, along with charity and fundraising events which give them a better understanding of their local community.
- Good initial assessment determines the appropriate starting level for each student. Teachers take into consideration any prior learning or hairdressing and beauty therapy experience to

make sure students are on the right level and course. Attendance is good on most courses.

- Advice and guidance are good. Teachers assess students' practical skills as part of the interview process to make sure they are suitable for the hairdressing and beauty therapy sectors. Individual pastoral support is also good with all students valuing the individual care from their teachers. Teachers and support staff are effective in dealing with students' personal concerns which they resolve promptly. Students feel safe within the college environment.
- Students use ILT appropriately to research hairdressing and beauty therapy topics. Students on media make-up courses use research well to identify themes that they can base their practical work on. However, teachers are not fully promoting the use of ILT in the classroom to develop students' wider skills.
- In most lessons, students develop English and mathematics well. Teachers are very skilled at introducing practical activities to improve students' understanding and enjoyment of mathematics. For example, in one mathematics lesson the production of a beauty gift box introduced volume and measurement well. However, not all vocational teachers reinforce English and mathematics, for example the use of ratios, and they do not always routinely correct spelling errors.
- Learning support in the classroom requires improvement. In the better lessons students speak highly of the support they receive which has increased their skills in reading and writing. In the weaker lessons, staff do not manage support well and students' progress is slow.
- Teachers make good use of equality and diversity in lessons. For example, teachers and students discuss the differences between European and African Caribbean hair and male and female beauty treatments. However, teachers do not formally plan when to introduce these topics into their lessons.

Visual arts

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This reflects students' outcomes which are good. Success rates have increased and are now at the national average. The majority of students achieve their predicted grades. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is good. Most students successfully move from a lower-level course to a higher-level course. Progress from advanced courses to higher education is excellent with most students successfully gaining places at university.
- Students produce practical work of a very high standard and in a minority of areas it is exceptional. In fashion, students combine creative and technical skills with confidence and they benefit from additional skills such as pattern cutting. Students' fashion illustration skills are strong and this helps them to create convincing designs.
- Students studying the advanced level foundation course in art and design produce highly ambitious and personal work. Students on this course have their own personal workspaces and this allows them to be bold and experimental with the scale of their work and use of materials.
- In the better lessons, the teaching is inspirational and teachers set high expectations of their students. Teachers carefully prepare their lessons and they work hard to ensure that students make good progress in lessons and acquire new skills.
- Students benefit from imaginative and challenging tasks. Students on the advanced level fashion course confidently and skilfully present research into style subcultures. These presentations show that students are checking their spelling and grammar and are developing a rich and broader understanding of other influences such as gender, stereotyping, music, film and dance.

- Students studying three-dimensional design gain from the excellent focus the teacher places on mathematical understanding such as the use of ratios and scale. The teachers’ reinforcement of technical knowledge and professional practices helps students prepare for work through, for example, site analysis reports for a project based on neglected public spaces.
- Teachers work skilfully alongside good learning support staff to provide positive and productive learning for all learners. Teachers of students on lower-level courses ensure that their teaching meets students’ needs and they make good use of visual examples and messages in the classroom to provide reference points and reminders. On foundation courses, teachers ensure that students value all of their pieces of practical work and understand the importance of learning from their mistakes.
- Teachers successfully embed equality and diversity in lessons. They make good use of female artists and designers as case studies and the exploration of the role the visual arts play in exploring social issues through, for example, documentary photography.
- Students value the good advice and guidance they receive from teachers to help them improve and prepare for their careers. Teachers provide regular and detailed written assessment feedback to students. However, teachers do not always identify and agree how students might achieve specific improvements.
- In the minority of weaker lessons, teachers do not always check that all students have understood the tasks, they are over reliant on open questioning and it is unclear how they have adapted the lesson to meet students’ needs.
- Students benefit from access to professional practitioners as part of an extensive visiting lecturer programme and through community arts projects. This helps students understand what they need to succeed as a professional visual artist. For example, a partnership with the Royal Opera House enables students to develop costumes and set design alongside leading professionals. Managers make excellent use of the adjoining civic arts centre and students attend a range of workshops which professional artists and designers provide at this venue.
- Resources and accommodation are excellent. Flexible technical workshop areas allow students to move easily from the production of drawings to realising their ideas in three-dimensions, fabric, print or photography. However, in one large studio the high level of noise from a variety of groups sometimes impedes effective teaching and learning.

Teacher training	Good
19+ Learning programmes	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers have maintained high success rates on the better performing courses and have substantially increased the rate for those courses which were not performing as well. This is similarly the case with retention and attendance.
- The majority of teaching is good and lively. Most teachers succeed in developing trainees’ confidence, underpinning knowledge and practical skills, and are adept at relating theory to current placements. Occasionally teachers introduce too many concepts too rapidly leaving insufficient opportunity for trainees to reflect upon and consolidate their learning. For a small minority of trainees, often the more academically able, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge.
- Trainees quickly gain the knowledge and confidence they need to reflect upon and improve their practice. They develop their skills in areas such as classroom management, and through designing teaching aids to promote children’s reading or apply smart phone technology in the classroom. Teachers provide trainees with well-linked learning which includes taught sessions, research, assignments, tutorials, personal support and observed practice.

- Courses attract trainees from areas ranging from early years education through to construction and they gain much from the support and critical appraisal of their peers. The informal peer networks which emerge from the trainees studying together improves their understanding and knowledge as often have they have limited experience and come from a single workplace.
- Teachers make good use of theory with which trainees readily engage. Practice observations provide a good opportunity for trainees to develop their professional skills in the workplace well. Trainees who have recently successfully completed teacher education courses value the benefits of their training and had the knowledge and confidence to point to areas for further improvement.
- Initial diagnostic testing helps identify where trainees need additional support including English and mathematics. From the start of the course, teachers work with trainees to establish expectations and set standards. Lively group and individual discussions take place about how trainees' teaching is progressing and what they need to do to improve their practice.
- Assignments and practice observation assessment are good. Teachers offer trainees clear feedback on why they may have not met requirements of an assignment or practice observation and they provide prompt remedial action to help trainees progress.
- Guidance and support are good and trainees freely communicate with teachers between taught sessions about their assignments and placements by phone, text and electronic mail.
- Recent measures to tackle underperformance within the area are having a positive impact. Course leaders are flexible about deadlines and in organising the curriculum to reflect the domestic needs of learners. Expectations of teachers and trainees are high.
- Managers respond well to surveys of trainees' views. They take effective action to improve provision when trainees are concerned about aspects of their course. Subject mentors and managers support trainees well.
- Teachers have a good balance of complementary skills, they are attentive to the learning and social needs of trainees and takes steps to tackle obstacles to trainees' progress. Staff meetings alert teachers to any difficulties which individual trainees may face and take action to resolve these difficulties. Teachers have not effectively incorporated the promotion of equality and diversity across the programme to enable trainees to increase their understanding of the diverse communities they work in.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. This reflects the low proportion of students that achieve their qualifications. Attendance rates are below the college target and they have declined. A small minority of students do not attend regularly, while a few are not punctual to lessons.
- Progress between levels of learning is good and has more than doubled this year. A new subject management team is having a positive impact on improving the progress and quality of provision, particularly teaching and learning. However, it is too early to judge new strategies on the good current retention and predicted attainment.
- Managers and teachers are very enthusiastic about the provision of English functional skills. Teachers relate learning well to vocational situations and make frequent references of how to apply English skills in the workplace.
- In the better lessons, teachers skilfully support students to develop techniques, for example, letter writing to persuade, inform and influence others. Students accurately identify how to write for different audiences.

- Teachers introduce a variety of interesting and stimulating topics. Students in several subject areas are beginning to value the importance of English. For example, hairdressing students now understand the benefits of improved communication with clients and the potential for repeat business. The use of persuasive language in business studies reinforces the power of communication to influence others by using emotive words and imagery. In less effective lessons, poor attendance and punctuality affects learning, and discussions, for example, are less successful.
- Teachers use resources well. Teachers provide and use vocationally personalised resources relevant to the age and interests of students. However, the use of ILT requires further development in the majority of lessons.
- Managers and staff have improved initial assessment and it is now good. This has ensured students are on the correct level of study. Managers and staff have introduced new guidance information which clearly defines the criteria students will need to progress and the available routes of progression between levels.
- Teachers’ written feedback to students is good. It is timely and accurately identifies errors and helps students build on previous learning. Teachers effectively summarise and check learning in most lessons. However, end of lesson evaluations do not sufficiently update other teachers of individual students’ progress for future target setting and planning.
- Teachers do not routinely share lesson plans with support staff. This hinders successful support for students. Teachers are not fully aware of the role of learning support staff, and in a minority of lessons the two do not work together effectively to improve students’ learning and progress.
- Teachers use naturally occurring learning opportunities effectively to discuss equality and diversity. For example, teachers and students discussed successfully the impact of media communication on gender stereotyping and the subtle way this influences attitudes and choices. However, teachers do not routinely plan to cover this area in lessons.

Business administration	Good
Apprenticeships	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which is reflected in good outcomes for apprentices. For the larger proportion of apprentices in business administration, success rates are above that for similar colleges. For the smaller proportion of customer services apprentices it is below.
- Apprentices progress well, enjoy their training and are able to relate theory to practice well. Apprentices develop good communication skills which they apply in the workplace when working on reception desks and speaking to clients. Apprentices have improved their time management and independent study skills well by, for example, completing research tasks outside normal working work hours.
- The standard of learning is high with apprentices making good progress during lessons. Assessors prepare their lessons well and provide students with clear learning goals for the lesson. Assessors use a variety of different teaching strategies when providing tuition for customer services. Assessors make good use of ILT and challenging questions to enable apprentices to relate to the impact of poor customer service. Apprentices are then able to appreciate the harmful effect this could have on their workplace.
- Assessors set clear outcomes to ensure productive use of the apprentices’ time. Observations of naturally occurring workplace activities are frequent. Apprentices use ILT well in assessment, submitting evidence from the workplace for example by using images of filing systems. Assessors skilfully check learning with probing questions on customer service so that apprentices are able to demonstrate their knowledge.

- Support and care for apprentices are good and apprentices are confident and able to complete work within agreed timescales. Apprentices receive good support via a workplace mentor to help with the transition from school to employment. Employers support apprentices well by adjusting assignment deadlines during busier periods in the workplace.
- Apprentices work well with the assessor and employer to achieve and progress to the next level. Apprentices undertake study which helps develop their skills effectively when working on reception. A minority of employers encourage apprentices to develop their information technology skills further by providing in-house training courses.
- Reviews of apprentices' progress are thorough and apprentices receive clear feedback on their performance. Assessors set clear targets for the majority of apprentices to complete their work on time. However, in a small minority of cases, targets are not sufficiently specific to ensure work is completed on time.
- Initial assessment works well to identify apprentices with additional needs and this enables staff to provide appropriate support. Assessors and employers promote the importance of mathematics skills in the workplace well. This enables apprentices to prepare accounts accurately for suppliers and catering companies. In addition, apprentices prepare budgets for college events and students' activities well. Staff develop English and ILT skills well, for example when apprentices prepare minutes and write letters for employers.
- Initial guidance and advice are effective and enable most apprentices to make the right selection for their job roles and for their possible career. All apprentices receive a successful induction. For a small minority of apprentices, advice and guidance at the end of their training are less systematic with low levels of progression into employment, further or higher education.
- Assessors promote key aspects of equality and diversity well. For example, apprentices learn how to deal with clients from different backgrounds effectively through a debate around stereotyping roles. Apprentices develop an understanding of the rich and diverse minority ethnic groups that make up the local community and assessors explain effectively how a good understanding of this area could attract new clients for a business.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and senior managers have established a clear and pertinent strategic aim for the college. It focuses on ensuring students and apprentices attain success through high standards of learning. This vision is well supported and understood by governors, managers and staff.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have sought to resolve key areas for improvement including students' attendance, governance, and managing performance. However, increasing the proportion of students and apprentices that complete their courses or learning programmes through good or better teaching, learning and assessment to gain qualifications remains a key challenge on a minority of courses.
- The principal has been effective in ensuring that governors thoroughly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and students and apprentices' outcomes. Governors now test senior managers and teachers' progress in improving provision at the college.
- The principal and senior managers have established rigorous management of staff performance to improve standards throughout the college. This includes the realistic assessment of the quality of teaching and learning, which has identified too few good or better lessons. Observers are identifying accurately the grade of lessons, and they are picking up how learning impacts on students and apprentices and what teachers need to do to raise standards.
- Senior managers are implementing staff training that links closely to appraisal and the observation of teaching, learning and assessment. They have trained subject managers well, establishing improved and quicker means for identifying key priorities for staff development

through better performance management. Subject managers now use a wider range of information to appraise teachers carefully, which provides more meaningful staff development needs. Advanced practitioners are supporting teachers who require improvement in teaching well and they are particularly effective in promoting good practice.

- Leaders and managers evaluate provision critically and the resulting quality improvement plan contains some key areas for improvement. The self-assessment report outlines clearly what requires improvement and what is successful. Managers take meaningful note of students' feedback and include it in quality improvement plans. For example, satisfaction in functional skills provision was comparatively low. To resolve this issue senior managers appointed a new functional skills team. Managers and teachers now promote the VLE strongly due to the low number of students that said they used electronic resources from home.
- Subject managers are fully aware of the direction the principal wants to take the college. New teams are thoroughly involved in improving provision. Managers now think strategically and they respond well to and plan for the educational and skills needs for the region. Senior managers work thoroughly with stakeholders, employers and partners in the planning of regional skill development, and in raising the profile of the college. Stakeholders and employers have a greater respect for the college than previously.
- Curriculum planning is good and meets the growing skills needs across the region. Planning and construction of new campuses are well under way. Senior managers have coherent ideas for what they want to offer and where and how students will be able to access provision. Senior managers have organised provision well, but the development of English and mathematics requires further improvement to ensure students attend classes and understand its importance.
- In lessons students and staff have mutual respect for each other. Student Union representatives work well in partnership with senior managers to support and improve the college for learners. Most teachers, trainers and assessors manage the behaviour and attitudes of students and apprentices well. Managers respond quickly to complaints using college procedures effectively to resolve issues appropriately.
- Promotion of equality and diversity across the college needs improving. Good practice, where it is evident, provides students with a rich experience of why equality and diversity is important, is a seamless part of learning, and it fully engages students' attention and interest. However, examples of good or better practice are not common across the college.
- The college meets its legislative requirements for safeguarding well, including those that provide training on behalf of the college. Managers also provide a good duty of care for adults such as support for those who encounter hardship. They are implementing robust arrangements that reflect the importance of students' and apprentices' well-being and safety. These include improved centralised records and a governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding who links closely with a dedicated senior management team. They respond effectively to safeguarding concerns that arise and are constantly looking to improve their systems.


Record of Main Findings (RMF)

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education				
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and Social Care	3
Early Years and Playwork	3
Building Services	3
Construction Crafts	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Visual Arts	2
Teaching and Lecturing	2
Training to Provide Learning Support	2
Foundation English	3
Administration	2
Customer service	2

Provider details

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education								
Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 7,581							
	Part-time: 11,758							
Principal/CEO	Ms Angela O'Donogue							
Date of previous inspection	February 2012							
Website address	www.southessex.ac.uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	615	79	1,365	101	3,561	639	73	6
Part-time	25	409	52	848	80	409	1	226
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	561	638	239	613	0	29		
Number of learners aged 14-16	129							
Full-time	2							
Part-time	127							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Badgehurst Training Ltd ▪ Nova Skills Education and Careers Ltd ▪ Brentwood Academy ▪ Independent Windscreen Academy ▪ Central Training Academy ▪ Crown Vocational Training ▪ Eden Training ▪ Crown College ▪ Prospects Learning Foundation ▪ Southend YMCA ▪ Vocational Training services 							

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- Debut Nail and beauty
 - ITEC Learning Technologies
 - Lifeskills
 - JET Hairdressing Academy
 - SCL Camberley, Surrey
 - SLIC Training
 - Learning Curve (JAA) limited.

Contextual information

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education has three main centres in south Essex, serving the towns and surrounding areas of Southend-on-sea, Basildon and Grays in Thurrock.

Unemployment in the area is higher than the regional and national averages particularly for the male population, where a higher proportion finds themselves out of work than their female counterparts. Those claiming job seekers allowance is also high, especially men. The percentage of the population with no qualifications is significantly higher than regional and national figures particularly in the Thurrock area. The number of Year 11 pupils who achieve five A* to C in English and mathematics is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Stephen Hunsley HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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