

Sussex Coast College Hastings

General further education college

Inspection dates

28 November–1 December 2017

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Swift actions by senior leaders have led to rapid improvements in students' progress. As a result, achievement rates in almost all subjects have improved substantially.
- Students and apprentices have exemplary attitudes to learning and behave very well. They respect each other, their teachers and assessors.
- Senior leaders, managers and governors have developed a strong culture of responsibility and accountability. With effective performance management, this has resulted in considerable improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Skilled, well-informed governors have high aspirations for students and apprentices. They hold leaders and managers to account very effectively.
- Leaders and managers work very well with subcontractors. They monitor and improve quality very effectively.
- Good teaching, learning and assessment in the vast majority of lessons result in students and apprentices developing good practical skills.
- Excellent links with local enterprise partnerships have resulted in a range of courses that meet local needs very effectively.
- Substantial investment in staff training for college and subcontractor staff has led to good improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Too few students studying mathematics at level 2 pass their qualifications and achieve high grades.
- Despite significant improvements in the past year, students' attendance is not yet high enough.
- Feedback to students on marked work, and targets for apprentices, lack detail. Consequently, a small minority of students and apprentices make slow progress.
- Too few teachers plan lessons for adult students carefully enough. As a result, a small minority of students do not make fast enough progress.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Sussex Coast College is a large general further education college in the south-east of England. It has two main sites in Hastings and two smaller sites nearby, specialising in construction and automotive training. The college offers courses from entry level 1 to level 3 and beyond in vocational and academic pathways. Around 1,800 students are on study programmes, with the largest areas of study being academic programmes, vocational art and design, mathematics, English and foundation studies. Almost 1,200 adult students are at the college. The college has recently expanded its apprenticeship programme and currently oversees just over 2,300 apprentices across the country.
- Unemployment in Hastings is higher than in the south-east and Britain as a whole. The proportion of people with qualifications at level 3 or above is substantially lower than when compared with the south-east region as a whole, or England. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades in East Sussex is just below that for the south-east of England overall. The 2015 English indices of deprivation ranks Hastings as the thirteenth most deprived of all local authorities.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders, managers and teachers carry out their plans to improve the skills of level 2 and GCSE mathematics teachers so that they can better prepare students for their examinations and help them develop their skills.
- Continue to improve students' attendance, especially of those studying English and mathematics, by taking effective action when students are absent from their lessons.
- Ensure that leaders and managers continue their work to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that:
 - teachers and assessors improve the quality of feedback to students and the targets set for apprentices at reviews so that these clearly show students and apprentices how to improve their work and their skills
 - teachers of adult students plan lessons thoroughly to take into account the needs of all students in classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are passionate about the success of students and apprentices. They dealt swiftly and effectively with the causes of the decline in achievement in 2015/16. Achievement rates in 2016/17 improved substantially in almost all subjects. They are now high and above those of similar colleges.
- Senior leaders have successfully created a culture of high expectations and accountability throughout the college and in all subcontractors. Recently appointed middle managers now have a stronger role in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This successfully challenges and encourages staff to improve. Curriculum managers are now accountable for all aspects of their courses, including improving students' progress and achievement. Nearly all students and apprentices make good progress with their learning.
- Senior managers have developed a carefully planned and highly valued staff development programme for managers and teachers. Targets and appraisals for teachers inform and link to training. Teachers' targets concentrate on developing teaching, learning and assessment. This improves students' and apprentices' progress and performance. Staff feel confident to develop and improve their professional practice. They are confident to try new activities and develop new skills because of the supportive culture within the college.
- Arrangements for managing staff performance are effective. Teachers and managers whose skills are not at the required standard either improve or leave the college. Leaders and managers have correctly identified subjects that are underperforming. Managers hold effective monthly monitoring meetings that concentrate on improving students' progress. Lesson observations focus on the progress students are making and managers use outcomes from these observations well to identify actions that will improve teachers' practice. Teachers have detailed, personal action plans so they know how to improve their teaching.
- Subcontractors receive very strong support from college leaders and managers. College staff work closely with employers to help them understand how to support their apprentices effectively and how to meet apprenticeship requirements. They make sure that training meets local skills shortages, closing skills gaps in subjects such as business and healthcare. They help employers develop and grow their businesses. Apprentices' achievement is high.
- The wide range of courses on offer reflect local enterprise partnership (LEP) priorities well. Managers adapt the range of courses to meet students' and employers' requirements. New courses include level 3 electrical engineering apprenticeships to provide progression from intermediate level, and family learning 'story sacks' courses which develop parenting skills.
- Leaders and managers have created a very positive environment for learning where everyone is valued. Students and apprentices show high levels of respect and tolerance, both in and out of the classroom. They develop an effective understanding of British values. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

- Managers have made good progress developing effective employability courses and good work experience placements. However, in 2016/17, not enough vocational students benefited from external work experience. Managers have planned for almost all students to have external work experience in 2017/18, but it is too early to comment on the effectiveness of these plans.
- Leaders and managers have not increased attendance sufficiently. Students' attendance improved greatly in 2016/17 but has declined slightly in 2017/18, compared with the same time last year. It is not consistently good across all levels and subjects.

The governance of the provider

- Well-informed governors have a wide range of expertise and skills that they successfully use. They have a good knowledge of the local community and use this to inform strategic decisions about the direction of the college. Governors support and question senior managers' performance rigorously to secure further improvements.
- Governors prioritise the achievement and progress of students and apprentices. They visit the college frequently, meet with students and attend monthly monitoring meetings. They accompany staff on lesson observations and run mock interviews with students. This helps them to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college.
- Governors and senior leaders have worked effectively together to monitor and manage finances to sustain the college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff place a clear emphasis on students' and apprentices' safety and security. As a result, students and apprentices feel safe and are safe. Senior leaders have made recent changes and investments to maximise safety. Leaders and managers have put in place effective e-safety processes to track students' access to online material.
- The safeguarding team, led by the designated safeguarding officer, tracks safeguarding concerns thoroughly. They keep detailed records of their actions and involve external agencies when needed.
- Staff, including subcontractors, have high-quality, frequently updated safeguarding training. All staff have recently received training about the 'Prevent' duty. The vast majority of students and apprentices understand how to protect themselves from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching, learning and assessment result in students and apprentices achieving well on almost all courses. Students enjoy their learning and work enthusiastically. They relish the challenge of improving their skills. Apprentices develop the practical skills that they need to be effective employees.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of teachers. They invest in comprehensive and effective coaching and development programmes for staff in the college and in

partner organisations. This improves teaching and learning, and motivates teachers. Managers help staff to develop other useful skills. For example, staff attend higher-level training in subjects, such as counselling, advice and guidance, awareness of autism and business management, to better support students.

- The teaching of practical skills on vocational study programmes, and for apprentices, is good. Most teachers, teaching assistants and technicians use their expertise and experience very effectively to check, develop and extend students' practical skills. Teachers use realistic working environments to support learning. They model commercial and industry standards effectively. As a result, students and apprentices develop a good work ethic. They successfully acquire work skills that meet the needs of employers. For example, in bricklaying, students build complex structures to a high standard early in their programme. In motor vehicle engineering, students practise skills needed to carry out an MOT test, including emissions testing.
- Students and apprentices receive prompt feedback on their work. Teacher and assessors provide good oral feedback that helps students to improve their knowledge and skills. However, feedback on written work has insufficient detail to make sure that students understand how to improve. Apprentices' reviews do not sufficiently identify the work or other skills needed to achieve the next stage of learning. Consequently, for a small minority of students and apprentices, progress is too slow.
- Staff support students with learning difficulties and barriers to learning very well. Staff use a good range of information from previous schools to diagnose support needs. Managers provide a comprehensive transition programme for students before enrolment and during their first term. They use this time to identify the best learning path for students. Students with high needs follow bespoke programmes that allow them to gain qualifications at different levels as well as improving their confidence and independent living skills. Most students make good progress from their starting points and almost all achieve as well as their peers.
- Teachers use information and learning technology particularly skilfully. For example, in an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) session, students listened to a voice recording and then successfully used the information to discuss what they had heard. In a science session, the teacher used an entertaining animation to show how the heart and cardiovascular system work. Students were able to recall the parts of the heart and information about blood flow with ease after the video. In an engineering workshop, students used video tutorials, designed for the workshop, to update their machining skills.
- Teachers manage discussions about equality and diversity expertly. For example, in an engineering lesson, students discussed stereotyping of roles openly and with confidence. In a travel and tourism lesson, sensitive and expert teaching raised students' awareness of matters about security and cultural differences when dealing with airline passengers. Most students and apprentices have a good understanding of British values and can relate these to everyday life in Britain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students and apprentices behave extremely well. They work hard and take pride in their work. They listen to what others are saying and respond productively. They treat each other, and their teachers and assessors, with respect and maturity.
- Students work productively in bright, stimulating and professionally equipped classrooms. They value their learning environment at college. Students contribute well to the calm and productive atmosphere at the college. Students with high needs work in well-equipped and purpose-built rooms, with equipment and resources that support their progress effectively.
- A strong and comprehensive programme of advice and guidance helps students and apprentices choose the right course at the correct level. Staff support vulnerable students well when they make these choices. Managers carefully match new apprentices and employers. Students often progress from a traineeship or complete a period of work experience before their apprenticeship. Very small numbers of students change courses in the first few weeks of term.
- Students and apprentices benefit from good careers guidance. An effective, impartial and well-qualified careers team helps them to understand fully the options for their next steps. An internal higher education programme raises aspirations of students who might not have considered this route. Almost all students progress to higher levels of learning, with most continuing their studies at the college. Apprentices remain in employment and a small minority progress to higher-level apprenticeships.
- An experienced pastoral team supports students well. Student referrals lead to the allocation of an independent personal adviser and students embrace the personalised support they receive. They develop effective relationships with pastoral staff that help build their confidence. Learning resources centre staff provide effective study skills sessions that improve students' achievement. Well-qualified specialist staff support those with dyslexia. Students looked after and care leavers receive good support that helps them progress to higher education and employment. Students with high needs receive high-quality, individualised support and teaching to help them succeed.
- Students develop good employability skills during their time at college. Employers visit lessons to talk about skills that students need in employment. Job coaches support vulnerable students well. Mock interviews involving governors help students to apply successfully for jobs. External projects with employers help students develop the skills that they will need in the workplace. Vocational subjects integrate useful employability topics into unit work. For example, hair and beauty students provide pampering sessions in a local care home. Hospitality students provide lunches for the Salvation Army and at a local hospice, and work with the in-house catering team. However, in 2016/17, not enough students on vocational courses had external work placements.
- An extensive programme of trips and visits supports students' academic and vocational progress well. For example, A-level students attend stimulating live performances of set texts, which improves their subject knowledge. Business students visit a local stadium to develop their marketing skills. Travel and tourism students visit cruise ships to understand the work environment. Apprentices benefit from a range of additional activities and extension tasks that develop their knowledge and skills. This helps them become more

effective in their jobs. For example, apprentices develop high levels of culinary skill through well-established relationships with celebrity chefs. Others gain further qualifications through e-learning and fitness instructor courses.

- Most students understand how to keep fit and healthy during their time at college. They attend the well-equipped college gym and receive heavily discounted membership. Students receive a free healthy breakfast in college each day. Staff issue food bank vouchers to students who need support.
- Students and apprentices develop a good understanding of topics to do with personal welfare. Managers are developing ways to better track students' understanding of these topics, but it is too early to see the impact of this.
- Attendance for all ages has declined slightly in 2017/18 and is still too low, particularly at levels 1 and 2. Attendance at English and mathematics lessons, for all students, requires improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Although achievement rates declined in 2015/16, swift action from leaders and managers brought about substantial improvements in 2016/17, particularly in adult learning. The large majority of students now stay at college and pass their courses.
- The standard of practical work by students and apprentices of all ages is very high. They enjoy their learning and achieve qualifications that allow almost all to progress to further or higher education, training or employment.
- For students aged 16 to 18, achievement at all levels is high and well above national rates. Those on general vocational programmes, who make up the bulk of students, achieve well. The much smaller numbers of those studying at A level make the progress expected, but achievement is just under national rates.
- Almost all apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeship. In 2016/17, overall achievement improved from the already high rates of the previous year. The proportion of apprentices who completed their apprenticeship by the planned end date also increased from the previous year's high rate. Both are substantially above national rates. Apprentices aged between 16 and 18, and 19 and 23, achieve particularly well.
- After three years of decline, leaders and managers have greatly improved achievement for adult students. Achievement is now high and considerably above national rates. The majority of adults study at level 1, where achievement is very high. Those following ESOL courses achieve well. Achievement rates are high for adults on access to higher education courses, and a good number gain places at university. Too few adults following level 3 diploma courses pass their qualifications.
- Adults and 16–18-year-old students studying functional skills English at levels 1 and 2 achieve well. Achievement has increased from 2015/16 for students aged 16 to 18 who take GCSE English, and is above the low national rate. The majority of adult students taking GCSE English attain a high grade.
- Students of all ages achieve well on level 1 mathematics courses. However, for the small numbers of 16–18-year-old students studying level 2 functional skills mathematics,

achievement is low and below the low national rate. Achievement of grade 4 and above for students on GCSE mathematics courses requires improvement among all age groups.

- Leaders and managers have successfully reduced the gap in achievement between male and female students. Students who were previously looked after, and those entitled to free school meals, achieve better than their peers. Students with high needs achieve very well. They develop good independent learning and living skills, and make positive progress from their starting points.
- Far greater numbers of students progress to higher education than is normal for the local area. Employers talk positively about apprentices' increased capability and reliability because of their apprenticeships. Although leaders and managers record students' intended and actual destinations, they do not analyse how closely these match to satisfy themselves that students are achieving the intended destinations.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Around 1,800 students are following study programmes. The majority study vocational programmes at levels 2 and 3. A small cohort is following academic study programmes with A levels as the main qualifications.
- Leaders, managers and teachers on study programme courses have high expectations of their students. Very few students leave their courses early. The large majority of students complete their studies and achieve their qualifications.
- Managers plan study programmes effectively. A wide range of individualised programmes gives students clear pathways to progress. Students receive good, impartial careers advice. They know how to achieve their intended destinations. Almost all progress into further or higher education, employment or apprenticeships.
- Almost all students on vocational study programmes gain good practical skills. They learn in realistic working environments and behave professionally. For example, engineering students machine products to precise measurements. In a hospitality lesson, students prepared French cuisine to a high level.
- On academic study programmes, skilled and experienced teachers enthuse almost all students. Teachers check learning effectively by using probing questioning. Teaching in most lessons helps students to expand their subject knowledge. For example, in an English literature session, students looked at representations of gender in different texts. This helped them to improve their technical and subject-specific language.
- In the vast majority of lessons, students develop good English skills. Teachers carefully explain meanings of words and check that students understand key concepts before moving on.
- Teachers contextualise mathematics skilfully in most practical sessions to improve students' confidence. For example, in a painting and decorating lesson, students made precise mathematical calculations when working with a colour wheel. In a sports lesson, students successfully used a range of mathematics skills to carry out body fitness tests on each other. In a travel and tourism lesson, students responded well to the challenge of

calculating flight durations across time zones and then factoring in delays to determine revised arrival times.

- In functional skills level 2 and GCSE mathematics lessons, teachers do not plan learning that interests students sufficiently. Teachers do not adequately check that students have understood topics. Lessons lack pace, with students all completing the same task. Students make slow progress and too few achieve these important qualifications.
- Teachers make frequent and useful links to working life in most lessons. This contextualises students' learning effectively and helps students to develop the skills and knowledge that they will need for work. For example, in art, level 2 students worked on a live brief to design the front cover for a book. In construction and hospitality, students work in different roles on restoration projects both in and outside the UK. However, not enough students on vocational study programmes completed external work experience placements in 2016/17.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Most of the college's 1,200 adults attend the college part time. Of those who take funded courses, the large majority study at level 1. Students enrol on a range of vocational, functional skills and GCSE qualifications.
- Leaders and managers have formed good links with external learning partners. This allows them to provide a wide range of accredited and non-accredited programmes that meet the needs of the local community. Courses run in accessible venues in the local area and encourage adults to take up education. This widens participation of those who find learning difficult.
- Students enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. Their attendance is high and they know how to work safely. If they have concerns, they feel confident in raising these with staff.
- Teachers make sure that students develop good practical skills. For example, in games development sessions, students design games using industry-specific software. In hairdressing, students learn how to cut hair with gradation. In science, students identify the parts of a lung and learn how to dissect in a professional environment.
- Students greatly value their learning. They describe in detail how it has improved their personal and social skills, and how it has developed their confidence. For example, in cooking lessons, students talk about how the course has improved their cooking confidence. In counselling sessions, students value the way they develop skills to deal with behaviour concerns in their grandchildren.
- Students benefit from the high expectations of their teachers. Teachers use their expertise to give students helpful feedback on how to improve their work, in addition to telling them what they have done well. Teachers carefully check whether students have understood topics and this helps build confidence in students.
- Students develop good employability skills. They learn valuable research skills using the internet, and make effective notes to record their learning. Class discussions develop their speaking and listening skills, and carefully planned lessons help them improve their numeracy skills. Skilled practical teaching helps them develop the professional attitudes that they need for their next steps in industry. For example, in the hairdressing salon, the

teacher assigned students to the role of manager. They then conducted client assessments with professionalism.

- Not enough teachers on courses leading to qualifications use the knowledge that they have about their students to plan learning so that students progress as fast as they can. Although class profiles indicate individual students' needs, in the majority of lessons students all complete the same work at the same pace. As a result, a small minority of students do not make fast enough progress.
- In most non-accredited courses, teachers do not record sufficiently the progress of students. Comments in individual learning plans are vague and students are not set useful targets to gauge their progress. Teachers do not clearly identify students' starting points, and end-of-course documentation is limited to an attendance certificate. Because of this, students, particularly those who return to take another course, have no record of what they have achieved.
- Students learn about diversity and are able to challenge stereotypical comments. For example, students on the access to higher education course successfully link current learning with the ethnical aspects of scientific research. They learn about topics including bullying, autism and dementia, and understand how to apply their knowledge outside the classroom. In literacy sessions, students identify the importance of voting and research the purpose of the parliamentary system. ESOL students sensitively discuss drug addiction patterns by different nationalities.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Around 2,300 students follow an apprenticeship programme, with almost all following frameworks. Half of these study at level 2, just under half at level 3 and a small minority take higher apprenticeships. The large majority of apprentices work in health and social care settings, engineering and manufacturing, and business administration.
- Leaders and managers oversee the quality of apprenticeships thoroughly. Subcontractors profit from strong relationships with college managers that help them to identify important strengths and quickly correct weaknesses. Managers communicate frequently with subcontractors and make visits, both announced and unannounced. They deal effectively and supportively with any concerns. Subcontractor staff benefit from the sharing of good practice.
- Apprentices value their training and the positive impact their new skills have in the workplace. Almost all make good progress, produce work of a high standard and complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date. Employers value apprenticeships in preparing apprentices suitably for the workplace.
- Apprentices develop their skills well in on- and off-the-job training. Teachers plan classroom learning effectively. This means that apprentices develop a broad range of skills that prepare them fully for work. For example, childcare apprentices learn about behaviour and rewards in the classroom. This equips them with the knowledge to manage challenging behaviour in the workplace.
- Enthusiastic assessors use their considerable skills and knowledge to enrich and enliven learning. They place theory effectively into a workplace setting. Assessors quickly establish effective relationships with apprentices and employers. This allows them to

provide high levels of support for both. Almost all assessors, employers and apprentices work effectively together to review apprentices' progress.


- Managers and assessors plan apprenticeships effectively to meet closely the needs of employers and apprentices. They assess apprentices' skills and prior learning well so that apprentices study qualifications at the right level. Assessors work with employers to match qualification units with job requirements, giving apprentices the best chance of fulfilling their potential.
- Well-qualified teachers and assessors communicate effectively with apprentices. They develop good strategies to engage apprentices. For example, assessors use current social media tools to alert apprentices to requests for work. Tutors help apprentices to achieve their functional skills qualifications. First-time pass rates are high. However, in a small minority of lessons and reviews, questioning is too basic and does not challenge apprentices enough to develop higher-level thinking skills or to apply their knowledge to their jobs.
- Frequent and supportive progress reviews support most apprentices well. However, most apprentices do not collect evidence before the assessment visits or take notes and record actions during visits. Assessors set challenging timescales for apprentices to complete their work to help apprentices achieve promptly. They carefully track progress and provide additional support for those at risk of falling behind. Leaders and managers at the college monitor and reschedule missed reviews quickly. A small minority of assessors do not set detailed targets that focus on encouraging apprentices to apply their learning in the workplace. Consequently, a few apprentices develop their skills too slowly.
- Apprentices feel safe and know whom to contact if they have concerns. Apprentices discuss and explore topics such as democracy, British values and equality with assessors at induction and during reviews. They understand how to apply this learning to their lives. Subcontractors use a range of resources to improve apprentices' understanding of safety. This helps to keep them, their colleagues and their customers safe. For example, apprentice motor vehicle technicians learn about skin safety and know about preventative measures for occupational cancers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130665
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	11,989
Principal/CEO	Clive Cooke
Telephone number	01424 442 222
Website	www.sussexcoast.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	208	815	683	199	990	188	3	1
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	300	752	230	735	1	179		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	63							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Abacus Academy Ltd Albion in the Community All Dimensions Ltd Crossland & Dudson Training Ltd Darley Training Ltd. Education Futures Trust Fresh Training Ltd Glass & Fenestration Training Solutions Ltd James Education Ltd KS Training Ltd							

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Mercia Partnership (UK) Ltd
Millennium Academy
Presidency London College Ltd
Royal Borough of Greenwich
Skills Training Ltd
The Development Fund
Welcome Skills Ltd

Information about this inspection

The vice-principal curriculum and quality, as nominee, assisted the inspection team. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Andy Fitt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kate Hill	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Gunn	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Sherrilee Dougan	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Monaghan	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Corbett	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Shackleton	Her Majesty's Inspector
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M1 2WD

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