

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

General further education college

Inspection dates

9–12 May 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	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Apprentices and learners on vocational courses develop skills that prepare them well for progression to the next steps of learning or employment.
- A high proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 and access to higher education learners progress to further education or training at a higher level, including increasing numbers who move on to higher education.
- More learners now complete and achieve their qualifications than at the time of the previous inspection; the large numbers of learners who study at level 3, as well as the many apprentices in subcontracted provision, are particularly successful.
- Learners receive good support in acquiring new skills and knowledge through the extra help available to them from a wide range of support staff, regular reviews of their progress and useful online resources.
- Subcontracted provision for adults and apprentices is well managed. College leaders and managers support subcontractors effectively and their learners and apprentices achieve well.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection, as a result of the effective management of teachers and good staff development.
- Leaders build their effective relationships with employers and other stakeholders to provide a responsive, relevant curriculum that prepares learners well for their next steps.
- Managers have taken effective steps to raise learners' progress and attainment in English and mathematics in the current year. However, low attendance in these subjects means that too many learners are still not making sufficient progress, particularly in mathematics.
- A minority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of their learners, particularly the most able and those on higher-level courses, and the work they set is not sufficiently challenging.
- Too few learners on English and mathematics courses, A levels and courses for adults achieve their qualifications.

Full report

Information about the provider

- South Essex College of Further and Higher Education has three main centres serving the towns and surrounding areas of Southend-on-Sea, Basildon and Thurrock. The college provides a broad range of vocational and academic courses for 16- to 18-year-olds, and courses for adults, in these centres as well as a small A-level provision in Southend. Over two thirds of provision is for learners aged 16 to 18. The college offers apprenticeships within the local area. The college subcontracts provision to 12 partners who provide apprenticeships and courses for 16- to 18-year-olds and adults. These are mostly based in Essex.
- The proportion of adults of working age who are not working and in receipt of benefits is higher than the national average in Southend and Thurrock, and around the national average in Basildon. A higher proportion of children are from low-income families than nationally and average earnings in the area are low. The proportion of 16-year-olds achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well above the national rate in Southend and around the national rate in Thurrock.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers should provide clear guidance to learners and parents on the levels of attendance expected by the college and take swift action to help learners overcome barriers to attending regularly. Teachers should ensure that learners fully understand the importance of attending all lessons and should expect learners to attend regularly and punctually.
- Teachers should plan their lessons to ensure that learners, wherever possible, develop new skills and knowledge relevant to their aspirations and employment as well as those necessary to pass a course.
- Teachers should set work for learners that allows them to excel and achieve at the highest grades of which they are capable, and encourage learners to produce consistently work of the highest standard.
- Teachers' feedback to learners should explain clearly how they can reach higher standards.
- Managers should ensure that courses which aim to prepare adults and learners with high needs for employment provide the opportunities they need to develop relevant skills, including work-related activities and/or work experience. Teachers should ensure that learners understand fully the demands of the industries and employment sectors that their courses prepare them for.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have identified clear strategic goals since the previous inspection, and work successfully towards achieving them. These goals focus on the need to improve college performance by successfully tackling the recommendations made at the previous inspection, and by meeting local and regional skills needs. Leaders and managers have had a large measure of success in moving towards their objectives.
- Since the previous inspection, a greater proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 now successfully complete their qualifications, and achievement rates for apprentices are just above the national rate. However, the proportion of adults achieving their qualification has fallen and is low.
- Leaders have made very good use of comprehensive labour market intelligence, demographic information and information gathered from employers to plan and provide a curriculum that meets local and regional skills needs. Leaders and managers provide good advice and guidance to a broad range of employers to help them prepare for changes to apprenticeships. They have also worked successfully with large numbers of employers and other partners to provide a useful and sustainable skills-focused apprenticeship provision. In a number of instances, managers have developed bespoke and specialist apprenticeships that meet particular sector needs; for example, in theatrical costuming.
- Senior leaders have worked very successfully to promote and establish a single identity for the college. Staff now work to common goals and objectives across the three campuses. The vast majority of teachers and all managers now work across campuses, and leaders have successfully established clear expectations for teaching and learning, and learners' behaviour and attendance throughout the college, although too many issues with attendance remain. Communications from leaders and governors to staff are effective, and the majority of staff understand well the strengths of the college and its remaining areas for improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked successfully to improve teaching, learning and assessment across the college by focusing relentlessly on improving the skills and performance of teachers, and what they expect of their learners. Staff benefit from very wide-ranging and effective support to improve their professional practice and better meet learners' needs. Coaching, mentoring and other forms of support from advanced practitioners are particularly effective in raising the aspirations and skills of the large majority of teachers. Where staff or managers have been unable or unwilling to improve their practice, leaders have taken prompt and resolute action to move these individuals out of the college.
- Arrangements for the management and teaching and learning of GCSE and functional skills courses are also significantly improved. Despite this, managers have not ensured that all learners attend their English and mathematics lessons regularly.
- Senior leaders and departmental managers mostly oversee and improve the quality of provision effectively. The curriculum and quality leadership team provides effective leadership, direction and guidance for heads of department and other staff. Managers use comprehensive course and departmental review processes effectively to bring about improvement; staff understand the processes well, and value the constructive challenge

to improve their work. For example, managers evaluate assiduously teachers' performance by means of wide-ranging reviews that involve teaching and learning observations, audits of course documentation and checks on attendance, as well as the quality of target-setting for learners and the thoroughness of progress monitoring. Leaders' expectations for subcontractors' performance are high, and are almost always met well. Managers also provide good levels of support and guidance for subcontractors, who value highly the collaborative approach and frequent sharing of good practice undertaken by college leaders.

- Leaders and managers are keen to secure and act on the views of learners, employers and other partners. Senior leaders, for example, take part in frequent 'question time' events, where learners can ask about the college's direction and policies and challenge managers if they wish. Leaders make good use of views gathered from 'feedback walls', comments boxes and periodic learner surveys to inform and improve provision. Leaders and governors carefully analyse any formal complaints and compliments and identify trends.

The governance of the provider

- Governors receive a good level of reliable and accessible information about college performance and learners' progress; a feature of governance that has improved since the previous inspection. At present, governors rely on paper-based reports on progress which limit their inquiries. Leaders have recently recognised this limitation and developed an online and interactive 'dashboard' of key performance indicators to be implemented in the new academic year.
- Governors have a good set of appropriate skills that they employ to challenge and hold leaders to account. They also provide good levels of support for senior leaders in setting and maintaining progress towards strategic objectives.
- Members of the board are frequent visitors to the college, and the majority take part in link activities with curriculum departments. Governors use these links well to meet and support department heads and staff, to identify learners' needs more closely and better understand their progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers ensure that staff understand well the part they play in safeguarding learners. Staff benefit from good levels of development and training activities that provide them with an up-to-date understanding of the threats posed to, and the kinds of support needed by, learners. Staff view the cross-college safeguarding team as very approachable, and value their expertise highly.
- Managers and members of the safeguarding team maintain very good contacts with partners such as local police, local authority social services and youth offending teams, mental health practitioners and a good range of specialist agencies. These contacts ensure that swift referrals to appropriate agencies when circumstances demand.
- Staff at all levels, and also governors, have a good understanding of the college's 'Prevent' duties. Teachers have received good levels of information and training about the

ways they can support learners at risk from radicalisation and extremism. The vast majority of teachers have the confidence and skills to raise learners' awareness of, and ability to avoid, risks. Leaders ensure that any learners who are at high risk receive rapid support and care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Improvements since the last inspection mean that teaching, learning and assessment are now good, and that most learners achieve well.
- Most staff effectively collect information on learners' and apprentices' pre-existing skills and knowledge; the needs of learners who require additional learning support are identified and appropriate support is put in place. Staff provide thorough initial advice and guidance to ensure that learners are on the correct course and level of study. Learners with high needs benefit from individually tailored programmes, effective learning support and specialist provision to ensure that they make progress, and as a result the majority progress to higher levels of study.
- Most teachers check learners' understanding of theoretical concepts effectively, and use probing questions that challenge them successfully to deepen their knowledge. The majority of teachers monitor learners' progress carefully. As a result, most learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications.
- Most teachers and assessors are highly qualified and skilled in their vocational subjects. They use their knowledge well to provide good levels of instruction and guidance during lessons. However, the high turnover of staff in some subjects such as English and mathematics, motor vehicle and electrical installation has disrupted some learners' progress.
- The majority of learners benefit from the good-quality, positive feedback that their teachers provide. For example, learners following the media and make-up course have improved the accuracy of lines and blending when applying make-up, as a result of feedback from teachers on their previous efforts. However, for adult learners studying courses at level 2 and below, feedback is limited and does not help learners to improve the standards of their work sufficiently.
- Most teachers use well-planned activities to enthuse and motivate learners. As a result, learners participate enthusiastically in discussions and group activities, and evaluate critically their own work and the work of others. For example, in an art and design lesson, learners working at level 1 commented proficiently on each other's use of shading within shape and colour and how it had affected the composition. However, a small minority of teachers do not use activities which capture learners' interest sufficiently, so that a small proportion do not learn enough or become distracted.
- Teachers assess regularly the development of 16- to 18-year-old learners' English and mathematical skills in their vocational subjects. The majority of learners following English GCSE programmes, who attend lessons, make good progress in improving their reading, writing and communication skills. Adult learners develop good skills in mathematics in their vocational subjects. However, in English and particularly in mathematics, too few learners on study programmes attend lessons regularly; as a result, those learners with poor attendance do not make enough progress, and achievement rates are low. Current

apprentices make good progress in developing new skills and knowledge in their English and mathematics functional skills.

- Teachers do not yet provide sufficient challenge for all adult learners or for the most able in different age groups. Most teachers now employ considerably more successful strategies to improve learners' English and mathematical skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners' good standards of behaviour contribute to a welcoming environment in the college in which learners enjoy learning and show respect for the ideas and views of others. In lessons, learners develop the ability to express themselves confidently, participate enthusiastically, work well together and readily seek support when they need it.
- Learners benefit from effective initial advice and guidance. They value the nurturing and support available to them in the college, both from their teachers and support staff, which enable them to stay on their programmes and succeed. A new 'swop don't drop' initiative which offered guidance to learners at risk of leaving in the early stages of their course, resulted in over 100 being supported to change, and the large majority of these remain on their course.
- Access to higher education (access) learners and apprentices are well informed about the impartial careers advice available to them and most progress to high-quality destinations; however, too many adult learners do not progress to further education or employment. Learners on study programmes value the careers advice and guidance they receive from their teachers, and the large majority progress to employment or a higher level of further education. Too many, particularly those in their first year of study, begin to plan their futures later than they should. Leaders and managers have recognised that careers advice needs to improve and have recently established a team of staff who are dedicated to providing careers education. However, most learners have not yet benefited from the support of this specialist team.
- Well-planned tutorials enable learners to learn about, practise and reflect on the personal skills they will need in their future life. Tutors regularly review learners' progress and successfully encourage a large majority to stay on track to succeed on their course. Learners appreciate the comprehensive and informative online tutorial activities. In Thurrock, learners enjoy and value the 'Digihub' rooms where they have tutorials. In Southend, 'Digihubs' are often too noisy and many learners pay too little attention to their work.
- Managers promote the understanding of democracy, tolerance, respect and the law well among learners and apprentices. They organise many valuable events which raise learners' awareness of the importance of diversity in modern Britain. These include the first-hand testimony from someone directly affected by extremism. At the time of inspection learners were developing their understanding of democratic processes well; they were encouraged to express their views on voting for 16-year-olds and on what they most value about this country. Equality is promoted well through initiatives in response to learners' requests such as the innovative 'Sportmaker' programme, which includes an all-women's football team, mixed football involving learners of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and a 'Soccability' team which competes with other colleges.

- Learners feel safe, and are kept safe, in college. They know how to report any concerns and most can remember and apply their lessons about online safety and personal health and safety, and also those which raised their awareness of radicalisation and extremism.
- Learners' attendance at lessons has improved since the previous inspection. Levels of attendance are high for learners with high needs and apprentices. However, too many learners are persistently absent from lessons, which contributes to them falling behind with their work, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers and managers do not consistently set high expectations for learners to achieve high levels of attendance and accept excuses for non-attendance too readily. During the week of the inspection, too many learners on study programmes and adult programmes arrived late to lessons and attendance was low in many classes.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners aged 16 to 18 make good progress relative to their starting points on applied general courses. The proportion of learners who make good progress has increased over the previous three years. Learners on business and media (radio and print) courses make particularly good progress. Learners on most A-level courses, and those on a small number of vocational courses, such as engineering and applied science, do not achieve the grades expected of them.
- Teachers and managers monitor learners' achievement of units, qualifications and mock examinations closely and use this information to set targets for learners to improve. As a result of teachers' effective monitoring of learners' progress, along with improvements in teaching, learning and assessment, a higher proportion of learners are completing work to a high standard in 2016/17 than in previous years.
- In 2015/16, the large majority of 16- to 18-year-old learners completed their courses in most subjects but, on courses in construction, English and mathematics, too many left before the end of their course, or did not attend examinations and so did not achieve their qualifications in these subjects. At the time of inspection, the proportion of learners still on their course has remained high for 16- to 18-year-olds, and increased significantly for adults compared to the same time in the previous year.
- The majority of younger apprentices and learners aged 16 to 18 studying full-time courses at levels 1 and 3 and those taking certificates and diplomas, achieve their qualifications. Leaders' data on learners' assessments in these subjects in 2016/17 indicates that a higher proportion of learners are attaining the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve their qualifications this year. However, too few learners on level 2 courses achieve their qualifications.
- In subcontracted provision, a high proportion of adults complete and achieve their qualifications. In the college's own provision, outcomes for adults are more varied; the very large majority of access learners and learners studying award courses achieve, but the proportion of learners completing and achieving their qualifications on ESOL and English and mathematics courses is low.
- A high proportion of apprentices in subcontracted provision complete and achieve their apprenticeships. However, in the college's small number of advanced apprenticeships, too few apprentices achieve their apprenticeship.

- A large majority of 16- to 18-year-old learners progress to a higher level of study or into employment or university. The proportion of learners progressing to university has risen substantially over the previous three years and is high. A high proportion of apprentices use their apprenticeships to remain in employment. Progression for adult learners is less positive, with a significant minority not progressing from one level to another, or not securing employment at the end of their course.
- A very high proportion of learners with high needs achieve their qualifications, and a high proportion progress to further education or training. However, a slightly lower proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities of any level achieve their qualification than learners without learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Learners with high needs become more independent and improve their ability to take part in social and community activities. Most adult and 16- to 18-year-old learners, particularly at level 3, are prepared well for progression to further education, training and employment. The large majority of apprentices develop skills that are closely matched to the needs of their employers. However, in a minority of instances in 16 to 19 study programmes and adult provision, teachers do not expect learners to develop skills at a high enough level, particularly the most able learners.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The college provides study programmes in most subject areas. The largest are: visual arts, media, health and childcare, science, business, information and communication technology (ICT), and sport and service industries. Two thirds of learners study at level 3, with the large majority studying on applied general courses. A very small number study A-level courses.
- Managers and teachers have designed courses that meet the requirements of study programmes well. They provide learners with a comprehensive choice of academic and applied general pathways; these programmes are enhanced by work experience and additional activities to develop the personal, social and employability skills of learners and their understanding of how to stay safe.
- Most learners produce high standards of work on most courses, and achieve high grades in their assignments on applied general courses. They develop good practical skills. For example, engineering learners studying at level 1 produced G-clamp components to a high degree of accuracy, and used micrometers adeptly to measure the accuracy of their work. Learners also develop higher-order skills such as research, critical analysis and evaluation skills to a good standard. For example, in a business lesson, learners enrolled at level 3 were able to quickly produce sophisticated, well-structured presentations of their research into the impact of environmental factors on businesses.
- Learners value the opportunities they have for independent study; learners studying courses at level 3 in particular develop good independent study skills. They receive helpful support from staff in the learning resource centre and value the breadth of resources they can access through the college's online learning environment.
- Most learners benefit from either external work experience or alternative, often innovative, work-related learning. For example, art and design learners were

commissioned by the Royal Opera House to make costumes and sets. A group of level 3 hair and make-up learners have been commissioned to provide the make-up services for a commercial fashion show, and music learners are integral to the successful running of a local music festival. Learners value this opportunity to develop their work-related, industry-specific skills and many of those interviewed by inspectors were able to explain how their work experience helped them make decisions about their choice of career or higher education.

- The great majority of learners have short-term targets that help them to focus on the skills and understanding they need to develop in order to achieve their longer-term qualification and progression targets. They review their progress against these targets regularly with their tutors, which contributes to the good progress most are making on their course. This information is effectively shared with all relevant college staff, parents and carers.
- A majority of learners who will be completing their courses in 2016/17 plan to progress to university, further education, employment or apprenticeships. However, too many learners have yet to finalise their progression arrangements and have not taken advantage of the college's specialist careers advisers.
- In a minority of lessons, learners do not make good progress in achieving the planned outcomes for the lesson. For example, a minority of teachers move on too quickly from tasks before learners have consolidated their understanding and skills. A small number of lessons lack pace; in these lessons, teachers set work that is too easy for the most able learners and that does not allow them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills fully.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Just over 1,600 adult learners study a wide range of vocational and academic courses, with over 700 studying qualifications in English and mathematics, 200 studying access courses and over 300 following courses in ESOL.
- One third of learners on adult programmes in 2015/16 studied courses with low achievement rates. Adult learners' progression to employment or study at a higher level was low. However, the large majority of learners on access courses complete and achieve their qualification and progress to good-quality courses at university.
- Teachers, particularly of ESOL courses, are insufficiently demanding of their learners. Too often, they fail to provide activities to help the more able learners to extend their progress in their studies, or use a sufficiently broad range of approaches to support those who are struggling. In too many lessons, learners become distracted and disruptive, talking among themselves or using their mobile phones to check messages or send texts. As a result, learners' progress is inhibited and too few learn enough.
- Teachers do not reinforce learning sufficiently or check sufficiently that learners have understood concepts or principles before moving on to new topics in lessons. For example, when new vocabulary is introduced on ESOL courses, teachers do not check routinely that learners understand its meaning.
- On level 3 courses, teachers pay insufficient attention to developing learners' critical thinking skills. Teachers are successful in developing learners' understanding of the

course content but do not always develop learners' ability to analyse, evaluate or synthesise proficiently.

- Learners feel safe and well cared for. However, their understanding of safeguarding, as it applies to their employment, is too varied. For example, on an alcohol licensing course, learners described clearly the role that they might play in keeping young people safe, whereas on an access course for people aspiring to careers in healthcare, learners' knowledge of aspects of safeguarding was perfunctory.
- Most teachers monitor learners' progress effectively. They provide learners studying level 3 courses with valuable feedback on their assignments, explaining clearly what learners have done well and what needs to improve. At level 2 and below, their feedback is frequently less detailed or helpful.
- Teachers mostly provide clear explanations of complex topics to aid learners' understanding. They use demonstrations and exercises well to develop learners' practical skills. For example, in hairdressing, learners were confident and professional in applying highlights to customers' hair; on an access course, learners carried out practical research effectively. Learners are able to describe their skills fluently, using appropriate technical language, for example explaining the reasons for different filing techniques in business administration. Although teachers go to some lengths to devise activities that are successful in motivating learners and adding to their enjoyment, the purpose of these activities is not always clear and they do not always lead to effective learning.
- Leaders and managers have designed a suitable programme of learning for adults, aimed at helping those with a history of low prior attainment, or who are otherwise disadvantaged, to progress to further learning or employment. Managers make effective use of their strong links with Jobcentre Plus and with local employers to identify and promote provision. They make good use of subcontractors to widen opportunities for adults in Essex to gain qualifications.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college provides apprenticeships to nearly 2,100 apprentices. Most apprenticeships are provided by subcontractors, with a small number, mostly in engineering and construction, provided by the college. Leaders and managers plan programmes to meet fully the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.
- Trainers provide good advice and guidance. Apprentices have a clear understanding of the progression routes available to them and make informed decisions on their next steps. A large majority of apprentices remain in employment, gain promotion or continue to a higher level apprenticeship.
- Trainers use their in-depth knowledge, understanding and industry expertise to plan practical lessons well, to ensure that apprentices develop new skills and knowledge that are relevant to their job and meet the demands of their qualification. In functional skills sessions, tutors plan engaging and motivational activities that extend apprentices' English, mathematical or ICT skills.
- Trainers work closely with employers to ensure that apprentices contribute well to their employers' businesses. The majority of employers are involved regularly in setting and monitoring meaningful short-term targets that ensure that apprentices complete work on

time. Employers value apprenticeship programmes and use them as way of nurturing staff to progress to higher levels and further their opportunities for promotion within the company.

- Trainers monitor apprentices' progress well through regular and effective progress reviews. As a result, a high proportion of current apprentices are on track to achieve their programmes on time. Trainers use their knowledge of apprentices' progress effectively to identify those at risk of not achieving, and take appropriate remedial action that is, in most instances, is effective. The majority of apprentices know what they need to do to improve their skills. However, a small number are restricted to completing tasks that simply meet the demands of their qualifications and are not encouraged sufficiently to develop new skills they could use in their workplace.
- Employers value their apprentices' contribution to the workplace and the effectiveness of their off-the-job training. Many employers were able to explain to inspectors how the skills and knowledge that their apprentices develop contributed to the business. For example, an electrical installation apprentice applied the skills in 'two-way switching' he was taught at college when on site with his employer.
- Apprentices feel safe and know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. In the majority of cases, they are able to explain how safeguarding matters are relevant to their work. For example, one beauty therapy apprentice was able to explain what she would do if a client was trying to influence her views inappropriately or discuss topics with which she was not comfortable.
- Leaders and managers have taken effective steps to improve the achievement rates of apprentices on college-based apprenticeships, which have been considerably lower than those provided by subcontractors. As a result, apprentices recruited this year are making better progress than their predecessors. Managers have tackled issues, such as the late registration of apprentices on functional skills courses, which had caused learners to take too long to complete their apprenticeships in motor vehicle and construction.
- In a small number of motor vehicle lessons, apprentices learn too little. In these lessons, teachers do not identify sufficiently well what learners can already do and how they can best help learners to develop new skills. Feedback from teachers in motor vehicle and electrical installation informs apprentices of what they have achieved but does not help them understand sufficiently how to improve and develop new skills.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college has 66 learners with high needs studying courses at entry level to level 4. A large majority of learners study on vocational courses, rather than programmes specifically designed for learners with high needs. They are funded by three local authorities. Managers use the funding for learners with high needs very effectively to help these learners to gain skills, knowledge and qualifications.
- Teachers have high expectations of their learners and support them successfully to achieve their personal outcomes. As a result, the majority of learners achieve their qualifications, increase their confidence and hone the skills they need to improve their communication and independence.
- Teachers and learning support assistants are well qualified and experienced and, when

necessary, receive the appropriate specialist training required to meet each learner's needs as detailed in their education, health and care plan and enable them to make good progress.

- Teachers carry out thorough risk assessments for each learner, which contribute to learners with high needs feeling very safe in college. Teachers make appropriate adjustments to courses when necessary and ensure that learners do not face unnecessary barriers to participation in lessons. As a result, learners settle quickly on to individually tailored programmes, feel well prepared for college life and are ambitious about the future.
- Teachers and support staff support learners well in their transition from school to college. Entry-level learners benefit from a link programme during their final year at school which includes training on travelling to college.
- Teachers and managers provide learners with ready access to specialist therapies with experts such as educational psychologists and communication workers. Learners use these opportunities well to develop social and study skills. Learners and support staff agree personal targets each week. Learners' success in achieving their goals helps maintain their motivation, so that they continue to make progress towards their qualifications.
- Learners use a wide range of resources well, including assistive technology, to improve their independence and communication and to remove barriers to learning. This technology includes voice-activated software, ergonomically designed keyboards, digital recorders and tablets with specialist software.
- The majority of learners benefit from timely and effective impartial information, advice and guidance. However, the minority of learners who do not progress to the next level of learning do not receive enough guidance on opportunities for employment.
- For the majority of learners, access to relevant work experience is good. However, a small number, particularly those studying at entry and level 1 courses, have not had the opportunity to improve their employability skills sufficiently due to a lack of work-related activities.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130672
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	11,677
Principal/CEO	Angela O'Donoghue
Telephone number	0845 5212345
Website	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 or above				
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18 934	19+ 274	16–18 1252	19+ 1011	16–18 3068	19+ 483	16–18 52	19+ 145
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18 704	19+ 848	16–18 278	19+ 716	16–18 0	19+ 5		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	71							
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 Limited ■ Basildon ITEC ■ Central Training Group ■ Creative and Cultural Industrial Trades Limited ■ Crown Vocational Training ■ Debut Academy ■ Eden Training ■ IWA 							

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- JET
 - SLIC Training
 - Soccer Coaching Limited
 - Vocational Training Services

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee. 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

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Chris Sherwin	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Fawcus	Ofsted Inspector
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Penelope Horner	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Preston	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Newbould	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Brennan	Ofsted Inspector
Terri Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Kathy Passant	Ofsted Inspector

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