

Easton & Otley College

Specialist college

Inspection dates

2–5 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Study programmes and adult learning programmes are inadequate; too many students do not achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers have not improved the poor quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes and adult learning programmes.
- Too many teachers delivering study programmes and adult learning programmes have low expectations of their students and do not challenge them to make good progress. Tasks and activities are often too easy.
- Too often, the lack of specialist teachers impedes learning on study programmes and adult learning programmes.
- The majority of students and apprentices do not improve their mathematics and English skills or achieve high grades in their GCSEs in these subjects.
- Attendance is low on study programmes and adult learning programmes. This limits the progress students are able to make.
- Too many students leave their programmes early.

The provider has the following strengths

- Most students and apprentices develop a high standard of practical vocational skills. As a result, they remain in or progress to employment or higher levels of education on completion of their courses.
- Students who have high needs make good progress and achieve their learning goals as a result of high-quality, well-coordinated specialist support and effective teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors, leaders and managers have good links with local and regional employers and have designed a bespoke curriculum to meet regional labour markets and skills gaps.
- Students on study programmes benefit from high-quality work experience and enrichment that prepare them well for employment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Easton and Otley College was formed in 2012 from the merger of Easton College in Norfolk and Otley College in Suffolk. Both campuses have large estates, based around working farms. The Easton campus has residential accommodation for 122 students from across the UK. The college provides courses in land-based subjects and in sport, public services, motor vehicle maintenance and repair, and construction. The college offers a mix of apprenticeship frameworks and standards in land-based subjects, with a large provision in agriculture and smaller provision in construction, sport, motor vehicle engineering, hospitality, management, customer services and business administration. The college provides both apprenticeship frameworks and standards.
- The college operates an extensive transport network to enable students from across East Anglia to access its provision. Major industries in the region include food and farming, energy, advanced engineering and manufacturing, and tourism. In East Anglia, pupils' achievement at GCSE is slightly higher than the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students on study programmes and adult learning programmes complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- Challenge and support students to make good progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide tasks and activities that are well suited to students' needs and abilities
 - give students helpful feedback so that they know what they need to do to improve their work, including their spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - set challenging targets to motivate students and help them to achieve their potential.
- Ensure that leaders and managers improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes and adult learning programmes by:
 - securing sufficient teachers with the relevant qualifications and necessary specialist knowledge and experience to deliver the programmes
 - ensuring that assessments are accurate and well timed so that students can produce work of a good standard
 - providing teachers with high-quality training to improve their craft of teaching
 - sharing the good practice in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with high needs and apprentices.
- Improve the progress students make in English and mathematics and increase the proportion who achieve high grades in these subjects.
- Increase retention and attendance on study programmes and adult learning programmes by:
 - ensuring that students are motivated to attend their classes
 - routinely challenging absences.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new principal and senior leadership team have not rectified all of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. They have put in place clear, detailed and ambitious actions to improve the quality of education from a very low base. As a result, they have significantly improved the quality of education on provision for apprentices and students who have high needs. However, substantial weaknesses remain in the quality of education on study programmes and adult learning programmes, and the proportion of adults and students on study programmes who achieve their qualifications remains low.
- Leaders and managers have not provided enough staff with appropriate experience and qualifications to teach adults and students on study programmes. After the previous inspection, leaders undertook a substantial restructure of staffing. This is helping to secure financial stability for the college. Leaders have since found it difficult to recruit sufficient teachers with the relevant qualifications and necessary specialist knowledge and experience. As a result, too many students on these programmes do not fulfil their potential.
- Leaders and managers have not improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes and courses for adults. They have put in place a new system of lesson observations, improved teaching and learning resources, a thorough programme of staff training and new advanced learning coaches. However, these measures have not yet had enough impact. As a result, too much teaching, learning and assessment is ineffective and too many students do not make enough progress. For example, too many students do not have time to produce their best work because of poorly timed or inaccurate assessments.
- The new senior leadership team recognises that the college's strategy for the delivery of English and mathematics has not been successful and that, as a result, students do not improve their skills and progress well enough at GCSE English and mathematics. Leaders have very recently revised their plans for English and mathematics provision, but it is too early to see any impact. They still do not ensure that students are placed into the most appropriate English and mathematics lessons quickly enough.
- The new senior leadership team has developed positive working arrangements with local and national employers, other colleges and local enterprise partnerships. For example, the college is now a key partner in regional agritech initiatives. Students benefit from the professional networks and access to employment opportunities provided by these partnerships.
- Leaders and managers have substantially increased the proportion of study programme students who undertake a high-quality work placement. Almost all students now undertake relevant, substantial work experience that equips them with useful skills and helps them gain appropriate employment.
- Leaders have used performance management well to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on programmes for apprentices and students who have high needs. Managers and teachers in these areas make good use of effective new methods for tracking learning and monitoring progress. For example, they provide extra support to hasten students' progress when necessary. As a result, these students and apprentices now make good progress, complete their courses and achieve their learning goals.

The governance of the provider

- New appointments to the board of governors, including a highly experienced chair, have significantly strengthened the board's range and level of skills and experience. Governors now possess the right skills, including considerable curriculum and financial expertise, and provide strong support and challenge to the new senior leadership team.
- Governors and senior leaders have developed a clear and ambitious strategic plan for the college in consultation with key local stakeholders. Consequently, leaders plan a curriculum that responds comprehensively to the changes that are emerging within the rural economy.
- Governors now have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and are well equipped to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of provision. However, it is too early to see the full impact of their recommendations.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Students and apprentices feel safe and are safe. Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding. As a result, staff respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns or incidents and follow them through to resolution.
- The college's designated safeguarding lead has good links with local authority safeguarding teams and other external safeguarding professionals, who help to provide effective support for students who need it. Leaders and managers use robust safer recruitment procedures that help to ensure that students are safe.
- Leaders and managers ensure that hazardous resources are used and stored safely and that access to them is appropriately restricted.
- Leaders have improved students' and apprentices' understanding of how to stay safe, including when online. Apprentices and students who have high needs now have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, students on study programmes and adult learning programmes do not have a good awareness of these risks. This is often because their teachers do not have the skills, knowledge or confidence to competently promote these risks to students.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection on the majority of study programmes and adult learning provision. The same weaknesses remain and, as a result, too many students on these programmes do not make the progress of which they are capable. However, apprentices and students with high needs benefit from effective teaching, and these students make better progress.
- Too many students on study programmes and adult learning provision do not make enough progress because they are often taught by inexperienced staff who lack the expertise necessary to promote effective learning. Around a quarter of all teachers in this provision are receiving support to improve their practice. However, most staff who teach

and assess apprentices and learners with high needs are well qualified and suitably experienced and ensure that their students make better progress.

- Too many students do not have sufficient time to produce their best work because of poorly planned or inaccurate assessments. In some instances, assessments are scheduled too close together. Some teachers are too generous in their marking and do not provide incisive feedback that enables their students to improve their work.
- On study programmes and courses for adults, too many teachers have low expectations of their students and do not effectively check students' learning in lessons. Teachers do not provide effective tasks and activities to enable students to improve their understanding and application of theory. The pace of learning is often slow, and many tasks are too easy. As a result, too many students do not fulfil their potential.
- Too much teaching of English and mathematics is not good. Not enough teachers take into account students' prior knowledge and skills and provide tasks and activities that challenge them to excel. Students of all abilities often work on the same activities that are too easy for some and too difficult for others. Most teachers do not provide helpful feedback that ensures that students know what they need to do to improve their English and mathematics skills. As a result, too many students fail to make good progress.
- Too many teachers set narrow targets that solely focus on completing tasks. They do not set targets that challenge students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, students who have high needs have challenging and useful targets that help them to develop their understanding and make good progress towards independence.
- Students and apprentices benefit from high-quality resources in practical lessons that help them to develop their practical vocational skills well. For example, students on equine courses benefit from access to a broad range of horses and well-equipped indoor and outdoor arenas that help them gain good riding and yard skills. Apprentices benefit from high-quality on- and off-the-job training, and accurate and reliable assessment. As a result, they produce work of a good standard and develop a wide range of skills that meet the needs of their employers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- Too many students on study programmes and adult learning provision do not regularly attend their lessons. As a result, these students do not make the progress of which they are capable. Attendance to English and mathematics lessons is very low. Too many students on study programmes turn up late for their lessons or engage in low-level disruptive behaviour.
- Too many students do not produce high standards of written and theory work. However, most students and apprentices produce practical work of a good standard and that meets the requirements of relevant industries.
- Too many students leave their programmes early. Students and apprentices who stay in learning benefit from high-quality impartial careers advice and guidance provided by well-qualified, specialist staff. Students also improve their understanding of their next steps through support from their teachers and visits by employers such as veterinary surgeons and directors of agricultural businesses. Consequently, most secure or maintain employment or progress to further study at a higher level.

- Almost all students on study programmes benefit from relevant and meaningful work experience that helps them develop useful skills for employment. For example, they undertake high-quality placements as equine yard staff and stewards and writers at agricultural shows. This valuable work experience greatly enhances students' understanding of, and readiness for, the world of work, and helps to ensure that most students progress to relevant employment on completion of their courses.
- Most students and apprentices benefit from engaging enrichment activities that help them to develop good skills for work. For example, they compete successfully in regional, national and international agricultural and horticultural shows. They acquire valuable additional qualifications, alongside their main programme, that improve their career prospects. For instance, students gain telescopic handler licences, and certificates in brush handling, tree felling and processing and operating chainsaws.
- Students and apprentices know how to stay healthy, and many participate in high-quality sporting activities at college. Staff and students use funding from 'Sport England' very successfully to encourage less-active students to take part in physical activities related to their courses.
- Students know how to keep themselves and others safe at work and in their daily lives. They understand how to use and store hazardous resources safely, and the importance of wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing.
- Students on study programmes and adults do not have a good understanding of the relevance of British values. Apprentices and students with high needs have a good understanding of such values and this helps them prepare well for life in modern Britain. For example, agricultural apprentices discuss contentious issues such as badger culling in a balanced and thoughtful way, taking all views and evidence into account.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- More than a quarter of students on study programmes and adult learning programmes, which together make up a large majority of the college's provision, do not achieve their qualifications. Although the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications improved a little following the previous inspection, leaders and managers have not sustained this trajectory and it remains low. Leaders' data indicates that achievement rates have declined slightly in around two thirds of learning programmes.
- Too many students on study programmes and adult learning programmes do not make the progress of which they are capable from their starting points. Deficiencies in staffing, along with poorly timed assessments and a lack of challenge in many subjects, limit the progress students make.
- Very few students achieve high grades in GCSE English and mathematics. Leaders and managers have plans in place to increase the proportion of GCSE students who make good progress in these subjects, but it is too soon to see any impact. The very small number of students who study functional skills English and mathematics make good progress and achieve their qualifications in these subjects.
- A high proportion of apprentices complete their apprenticeships successfully. The proportion who complete within planned timescales has increased on previous levels in most subjects.

- Almost all students and apprentices who complete their courses progress to positive destinations. Most students gain employment in careers related to their courses or progress to learning at a higher level.
- Students with high needs make good progress and most achieve their qualifications and their learning goals. They greatly improve their confidence and communication skills and make good strides in achieving independence.
- Leaders and managers have successfully narrowed most achievement gaps between different groups of students. However, those with experience of local authority care do not fare as well as other students.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- The college has 1,638 students on 16 to 19 study programmes, almost half of whom study at level 3. The remainder are enrolled on programmes at levels 1 and 2. The majority of students study land-based subjects. Other courses include sport, construction and motor vehicle maintenance and repair. Study programmes are by far the largest provision provided at the college.
- Teachers do not enable students to make good progress. They do not provide activities that challenge the most able to make swift progress or enable others to reach their potential. Tasks and activities in lessons are often too easy.
- Too many teachers do not set challenging targets that enable students to know what to do to improve their work and make rapid progress. When they set targets, they do not effectively monitor their students' progress towards these targets or intervene to challenge and support students who have fallen behind in their studies. As a result, too many students fail to make good progress.
- Too many teachers have low expectations of their students. For example, teachers do not challenge and motivate students to produce a good standard of written work in lessons. Students often become demotivated by the slow pace of lessons. In some lessons, students turn up late or lose interest and cause low-level disruption, affecting the work and study of others.
- Teachers do not use assessment effectively to check the progress of their students. As a result, teachers do not adjust their teaching to take into account students' progress or level of understanding in lessons.
- Leaders now ensure that the provision meets the principles of 16 to 19 study programmes. For example, almost all students benefit from high-quality, relevant work experience that prepares them well for their future careers. Leaders and managers have greatly improved this aspect of study programmes since the previous inspection. However, the quality of provision is inadequate.
- Students receive extensive and valuable careers advice and guidance during their programmes. This ensures that most progress to suitable employment or further study.

Adult learning programmes

Inadequate

- The college has 344 students on vocational adult learning courses and programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3. Around a third of these study alongside younger students on 16 to 19 study programmes. The remainder are on adult-only provision, including courses in dog grooming, floristry and access to higher education courses in animal management.
- Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of students, and lessons lack purpose. They do not challenge students sufficiently to make the progress of which they are capable from their starting points. Consequently, too many students do not fulfil their potential and too few students achieve their qualifications.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers do not effectively check students' understanding and progress. Consequently, they do not know how to develop students' learning further and, as a result, students make poor progress.
- Teachers do not use targets precisely enough to enable students to make good progress. Too many students, including many of those progressing into the second year of their courses, do not know what their target grades are or what they need to do to achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on helping students to improve their written English. Students' standards of work are undermined by basic grammatical errors and a lack of vocational or technical language.
- Not enough students attend their lessons regularly and as a result they fail to acquire sufficient knowledge, develop their understanding and make sufficient progress.
- Too many students have a too superficial understanding of the importance of British values. As a result, too many are not well prepared for life as active citizens in modern Britain.
- Leaders and managers work effectively with a range of partners to ensure that courses are designed to equip learners with the right skills to meet local and regional labour market needs. However, while each strand of the adult learning programme has a clearly defined purpose, the quality of provision is inadequate.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college has 441 apprentices in a wide range of land-based industries, as well as sport, motor vehicle engineering, business administration, construction, hospitality, management and customer services. Just over half of apprentices are aged 16 to 18 and the remainder are 19 or over. A total of 80 apprentices are enrolled on new standards-based apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers successfully plan and manage apprenticeships that fully meet the principles and requirements of apprenticeships provision. They have effectively launched new standards-based apprenticeships and provide good support and training to ensure that employers fully understand their role. Apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships clearly understand planned end-point assessments and effectively build their skills, knowledge and behaviours towards such assessment.
- Leaders and managers have successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices. As a result, a high proportion of apprentices complete their

apprenticeships and an increasing number do so within planned timescales. Staff plan helpful and robust actions to ensure that those who are struggling in their studies can catch up and complete successfully. However, some apprentices studying transportation, agriculture, horticulture and conservation do not complete their apprenticeships in time. Too many horticulture apprentices leave their programmes before completion.

- Leaders and managers work productively with employers and the local enterprise partnership to ensure that apprenticeships meet local and regional labour market needs. Apprentices benefit from these productive relationships that provide access to high-quality job opportunities. Staff provide relevant information about workplace opportunities that help apprentices to plan their careers well. Some apprentices gain promotion or increased responsibility in their roles at the end of their apprenticeships.
- Employers are closely involved in planning and delivering their apprentices' training. They attend regular progress meetings and have an accurate understanding of their apprentices' work and what is left to do. This enables them to provide effective and prompt opportunities at work to help apprentices make good progress.
- Most apprentices benefit from high-quality on- and off-the-job training. Tutors expertly relate abstract theory to workplace settings and practice. Most apprentices improve their knowledge and understanding by conducting independent research on industry regulations as a part of their off-the-job training. They use this well to improve their industry-specific skills such as the repair and safe use of tractors, the control of diseases and welfare of livestock and crops, and staff supervisory skills.
- Too much of assessors' feedback is overly positive and does not provide enough guidance to enable apprentices to improve their English and mathematics skills. As a result, some apprentices do not improve these skills to meet the needs of their employers, for example writing technical reports to the required specification. However, vehicle and land-based servicing apprentices develop their mathematical and digital skills well. They quickly master the digital skills they need to retrieve service information online and successfully use diagnostic software.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college receives high needs funding for 78 learners, the majority of whom are enrolled on foundation provision. Just over half study on the college's 'future choices' programme. This programme helps learners develop skills for life and work, alongside gaining college certificates in animal care, gardening and horticulture, and arts and crafts. Learners on courses leading to external qualifications enrol on entry-level courses in independent living and land-based industries. All learners study mathematics and English at an appropriate level. A few learners are enrolled on study programmes at levels 2 and 3.
- Leaders and managers use the funding they receive for learners with high needs to ensure that most learners benefit from good teaching, resources and support to fulfil their potential. For example, managers secure a broad range of well-coordinated specialist services such as music therapy and speech and language therapy, as well as helpful assistive technology. As a result, most learners on foundation provision make good progress from their starting points, increase their ability to study and live independently and achieve their learning goals.

- Managers and teachers effectively use education, health and care (EHC) plans and early assessments to accurately identify individual support needs and provide bespoke learning programmes. As a result, most learners are highly motivated and complete their courses.
- Teachers have high expectations of their learners. Most learners on foundation provision take pride in producing work of a high standard and enjoy working towards and achieving challenging targets. For example, learners use computers well in entry-level English lessons to write letters with a good level of content, accurate use of paragraphs and correct punctuation that exceed the required level of complexity for their qualifications.
- Managers and teachers pay assiduous attention to recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses. Teachers provide teaching and assessment that augment the progress students make.
- Managers do not ensure that the very small number of learners with high needs who follow vocational courses benefit from bespoke targets that are regularly reviewed and that challenge them to excel. Too many teachers provide cursory feedback on these learners' written work that does not enable them to know how to improve their work.
- Almost all learners progress to positive next steps in education or employment as a result of the helpful support and high-quality careers advice and guidance they receive. Staff have recently designed an innovative curriculum to help students to progress to supported employment. This includes visits from external partners and weekly project work off-site to increase students' confidence and inform their career choices. Learners participate in relevant work experience that helps them gain good skills for employment.
- Learners benefit from an inclusive learning environment where they feel safe and happy. They know how to report any concerns they may have. They have an appropriate understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. For example, learners with complex needs and limited speech are able to demonstrate proficiently how they communicate through using symbols for 'stranger danger' and 'run, hide, tell' well.

Provider details

Unique reference number	138670
Type of provider	Specialist college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,300
Principal/CEO	Jane Townsend
Telephone number	01603 731200
Website	www.eastonotley.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)	379	56	469	119	790	169	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	164	74	78	121	1	3		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	78							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, 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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