

Sussex Coast College, Hastings

Partial reinspection report

Unique reference number: 130665

Name of lead inspector: Alan Hinchliffe HMI

Last day of inspection: 23 September 2009

Type of provider: General Further Education college

Address: Archery Road
St. Leonards-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN38 0HX

Telephone number: 01424 442222

Introduction

Sussex Coast College, Hastings (formerly Hastings College of Arts and Technology) was last inspected in May 2008. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas except construction, which was judged to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for reinspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Construction	4	2

Context

The college currently has 344 students attending a range of full- and part-time construction courses from foundation level to advanced level. Provision includes plumbing, brickwork, painting and decorating, carpentry and technician programmes. In addition to students based at the college, there are 75 apprentices and a small number of Train to Gain learners. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and are taking full-time courses at foundation and intermediate levels.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 have improved and are good. Success rates for adult learners have also improved and are satisfactory. Overall success rates for apprentices have improved significantly and are very high, although not enough learners complete their frameworks in the time allocated to them.
- The standard of students' practical work is good. Students develop good basic specialist craft skills to industrial standards together with good employability skills. Learners enjoy both their theory lessons and the practical work. One student related how interested he had become in mathematics in a very short time, having disliked the subject at school.
- Teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Inspection evidence supports the college's findings that nearly all lessons are good or better. In outstanding lessons, teachers make highly effective use of learning resources to add variety and to challenge students to think for themselves. The introduction of vocational skills practitioners to help teachers to support students in lessons is having a beneficial impact, but this could be strengthened.
- Lesson planning, particularly for practical sessions, is sometimes weak because it does not adequately plan the tasks that individual students need to focus on.
- Full-time students receive insufficient opportunities for work experience.
- Staff development is particularly good. Teachers attend weekly development sessions designed to improve standards in teaching and learning, and are supported by an enthusiastic subject learning coach. There has been a successful focus on active learning to develop variety and interest in lessons.
- Students feel very safe and valued, and receive good support from their teachers. Their views are sought and responded to. They know who to speak to if they experience problems at college. Students value the regular feedback from teachers that informs them of their progress and what they need to do to improve. Students report that there are insufficient lockers to store their personal belongings.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. The introduction of a two-stage interview procedure supported by taster sessions has led to more students being on the right course and completing it successfully. Initial assessment, to determine if students need any extra support, is effective.
- Resources for practical work have improved and are satisfactory. There is good observance of health and safety and particularly vigilant attention to wearing personal protective equipment. Risk assessments are in place in workshops and are satisfactory. Weaknesses in safe working practices identified at the previous inspection have been addressed satisfactorily.
- Leadership and management are good. A detailed quality improvement plan following the last inspection has been successfully implemented. More rigorous

procedures for managing both staff and student performance have had a significant impact. For example, both staff and students have a clearer understanding of the expectation that students will attend all sessions and behave appropriately. Curriculum managers hold regular one-to-one meetings with team members to focus on students' attendance and their progress.

- The college has expanded construction provision by establishing the Energy Centre based in a local industrial estate. This has been effective in engaging local employers in learning programmes. The centre provides specialist short courses for industry in electrical installation, plumbing, gas and energy.

What does Sussex Coast College, Hastings, need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates for adult learners by ensuring that their progress is monitored as rigorously as it is for younger students.
- Ensure that all staff, employers and work-based learners are fully aware of the requirement that apprentices should complete their frameworks in the time allocated.
- Ensure that practical sessions are even more effective by planning more carefully how each student will practise the skills that they need to develop.
- Make more effective use of the vocational skills practitioner role by encouraging teachers to discuss lesson planning with the practitioners.
- Develop work experience for full-time students so that they have the opportunity to experience the industry at first hand.

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Sussex Coast College, Hastings is a medium-sized, general further education college serving Hastings and the surrounding rural area in Rother District. The college offers a wide range of courses to meet local community needs. The current principal joined the college in September 2006. Since then the college has appointed a new senior management team and undergone considerable staff restructuring. The college is due to move into new, purpose-built accommodation in the centre of Hastings in November 2009.

The college was last inspected in May 2008. At that inspection, overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, and quality of provision were judged to be satisfactory. Leadership and management, and capacity to improve, were judged to be good. Of the six sector subject areas inspected, one was judged to be outstanding, three good, one satisfactory, and one inadequate. This report focuses on key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and other aspects of provision emerging through pre-inspection analysis.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has the college made in improving quality assurance procedures, self-assessment and improvement planning?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

At the last inspection quality assurance procedures and self-assessment were judged to be satisfactory. The college has made significant progress in improving both the rigour and the impact of quality assurance procedures, and self-assessment and improvement planning are increasingly effective in identifying weaknesses and improving key aspects of provision. The progress of students on every course is reviewed each term, and the views of learners and employers, where appropriate, are sought. Reviews are informed by comprehensive data on all aspects of performance. Senior managers conduct performance reviews of all provision each term, and the clear improvement plans arising from these reviews, based on a detailed risk analysis, are carefully and regularly monitored. The improved procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision have had a demonstrable impact in improving the accountability of teachers for ensuring that all students succeed on their courses.

Course reviews have improved. They are briefer, focus more sharply on key issues, and make better use of data. Managers recognise that there is scope for further improvement in the clarity of judgements contained in these evaluations. It remains the case that in both course reviews and subject area reviews the analysis of the quality of teaching and learning tends to be superficial. The overall self-assessment report for the college is sharply focused and judgements are based on sound evidence. Procedures for validating graded judgements across the college are

thorough and make good use of external stakeholders. The quality improvement plan is concise and effectively prioritises the key areas for further development.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has the college made in improving students' achievements, particularly for those aged 16 to 18? Significant progress

Significant progress has been made in improving students' achievements, particularly for those aged 16 to 18. Students' achievements, and the standard of their work, were judged to be satisfactory at the last inspection. Since then, the proportion of students who complete their courses successfully has risen and is above the national average for similar colleges. Data presented by the college for 2008/09 show a much improved picture for students aged 16 to 18 on courses at intermediate and advanced level. For example, on advanced level courses success rates rose to 81% from 66% in the previous year. On intermediate level course, success rates rose by six percentage points to 77%, above the previous year's national average. The most notable feature of students' achievements is the significant improvement in students' performance on advanced level courses. Students taking A-level and AS-level courses in the recently established 'Academy 6' achieved particularly well, with the success rate reaching 100% for A-level and 81% for AS-level. Equally significantly, data from the Advanced Level Performance System (ALPS) show that students made outstanding progress when their achievements are compared with their performance in their GCSEs. Students on advanced level vocational courses also made exceptional progress.

For adult learners in 2008/09, the proportion of learners who completed their courses successfully rose significantly for those on intermediate level courses. They remained fairly constant for those at foundation level, where success rates are high, and at advanced level, where they are around average. Work-based learning success rates have improved and are now very high, although the proportion of learners who complete their apprenticeships on time remains low. This situation is expected to improve over the next 18 months as a backlog of learners leave the system.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in raising the proportion of good or better lessons? Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, and in the college self-assessment report for 2007/08, the quality of teaching and learning was judged to be satisfactory and improving. A key aim for the college was to improve the proportion of lessons that were good or better. The college has made reasonable progress in achieving this aim. Both inspection evidence and evidence from the college's own quality assurance procedures indicate that teaching and learning are improving, and this hypothesis is supported by the improvement in students' achievements. Improvement has been brought about by a range of initiatives. For example, teachers judged to be satisfactory or inadequate have received intensive support from subject learning

coaches and advanced practitioners to help them to improve their practice. A significant number of teachers have left the college. New teachers are observed teaching a lesson as a key part of the recruitment process. Extensive staff development has given all teachers access to a wide range of opportunities to reflect on, and develop, their practice. A strong focus on developing the use of information and learning technology, including the use of cutting edge technology such as podcasts and wikis, has had a beneficial impact on learning in some subject areas.

The college has used its internal lesson observation system both to assess the quality of teaching across the college and to focus on raising standards in the classroom. The results from lesson observations feed directly into teachers' appraisals and staff development plans. However, although much valuable information is captured through lesson observation records, most of those scrutinised did not articulate sufficiently clearly the key features of the lesson that led to the judgement being made. As a consequence, it is not easy for many teachers to tell from the records exactly what they need to do to improve. The evidence recorded on the forms does not always justify the grade recorded. In aspects of sessions judged to be outstanding, there is insufficient recording of the exemplary practice to use for the sharing of good practice.

Leadership and management

What progress has the college made in establishing, and improving the quality of provision in, 'Academy 6'? Significant progress

'Academy 6' was established by the college in 2007 as a discrete academic sixth form offering a range of A-levels and the International Baccalaureate, and was designed to raise aspirations in Hastings and offer an alternative to other sixth forms in schools and colleges in the area. The first set of AS-level results, in 2008, was disappointing. Since then, the college has made significant progress in establishing 'Academy 6' as a viable and successful addition to local provision for advanced level courses for full-time students. As discussed earlier in this report, A-level and AS-level results were very good indeed in 2008/09, and the progress made by students in comparison with their prior attainment was outstanding. This rapid progress has been brought about by a combination of good leadership, decisive action to ensure that appropriate teachers were in place, and the speedy development of a culture of high expectations of both staff and students. Students enjoy their lessons, and report very favourably on the extent of the support given to them by their teachers outside lessons. Students' progress is rigorously monitored, and aspirational targets designed to ensure that they reach their full potential are set. Appropriate and rapid steps are taken if students begin to fall behind.

The provision at 'Academy 6' has grown rapidly, with around 170 students commencing AS-level courses in the current year compared with 41 in 2008/09. College leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that this rapid growth in numbers, and the consequent need to expand the number of teachers, does not jeopardise the quality of the provision.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009