

Chelmsford College

Further education college

Inspection dates

12–15 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	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors and senior leaders have high expectations and communicate well an effective learning strategy to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners.
- Leaders and managers carefully monitor and review the progress of learners to ensure that they are on track.
- On successful completion of their qualifications, almost all learners progress into meaningful employment or further study.
- The large majority of teachers and work-based tutors have high expectations of their learners. Their effective teaching and coaching encourage learners to reflect and develop a deeper and wider understanding of their subjects.
- Effective partnerships with employers enable learners to participate in high-quality work experience. As a result, learners gain good skills, highly valued by employers.
- Learners who have learning difficulties or disabilities profit from good provision that ensures that almost all complete their programmes and achieve their qualifications. They gain effective independent living skills.
- The large majority of teachers provide stimulating teaching activities which are purposeful and enable most learners to make good progress.
- Learners and apprentices are respectful and behave well. They increase their levels of confidence and demonstrate a good work ethic.
- Learners have a good awareness of the risks from extremist groups and possible radicalisation. However, too few adult learners have a good understanding of such issues.
- Too few teachers enable learners to improve the standard of their written English and communication skills.
- Too few learners studying English and mathematics at GCSE achieve the high grades of which they are capable.
- Not enough apprentices aged 16 to 18 complete their programmes within their planned timescales.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Chelmsford College is a medium-sized general education college based on three sites in the city of Chelmsford. It offers 16 to 19 study programmes, apprenticeships including a small number of new apprenticeships standards programmes, courses for adult learners and provision for learners with high needs.
- The proportion of pupils who leave school within the catchment area of the college and who achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the regional average and around the national rate. The college is located in an affluent part of the county and unemployment is below the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen provision for teaching English and mathematics so that learners and apprentices improve the standard of their English skills and more learners achieve well and gain the high grades of which they are capable.
- Ensure that work-based tutors work effectively with apprentices aged 16 to 18 in order for them to complete their programmes within their expected timescales.
- Ensure that all learners, particularly adults, have a good understanding of the dangers from extremist groups and possible radicalisation.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors and leaders have high expectations and aspirations, and communicate these well to staff. As a result of good leadership and direction there has been a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and subsequently on outcomes for learners. Teachers, work-based tutors and staff feel respected and valued, and as a result they contribute well by using their expertise to enable a culture of continual improvement at the college.
- Senior leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well. They have confidence in their interventions and have made good progress in improving the quality of provision since the previous inspection. They work very effectively with employers, local authorities and industry partners to ensure a sustainable future for the college. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum and courses offered at the college match closely local and regional skills shortages and have secured a sound financial position for the college. Consequently, learners gain skills valued and needed by employers locally and regionally.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of courses and progression routes into employment or further learning. Leaders respond swiftly and positively to requests for new provision. For example, leaders are well positioned and work well with employer groups to introduce new apprenticeship standards. They have undertaken significant work to integrate learners who have not previously accessed formal learning back into education.
- Leaders use effective performance measures to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment practice continues to improve. Managers have a good focus on the craft of teaching and appreciate the support they have gained for their own development. Leaders and managers correctly identify areas for improvement and use information carefully to provide teachers and work-based tutors with well-considered and timely action plans and support to promote improvement and good practice.
- Governors, leaders and managers monitor the quality of provision thoroughly. They assiduously use information on the progress that learners make and the outcomes they achieve to implement improvement strategies where required, and in a timely manner. They take swift and immediate action to act upon any underperformance. As a result, leaders have dealt effectively with almost all of the recommendations from the previous inspection. However, there remain a few areas of the provision, including the development of learners' English skills, that are not yet good enough to ensure that all learners make the progress expected of them.
- Managers have introduced a highly effective learner monitoring and tracking process which allows all staff to access reliable and accurate information. Managers and teachers use this well to identify swiftly any individual or group underperformance. Consequently, they implement effective interventions to ensure that most learners advance. Almost all learners make at least the progress expected of them and almost all achievement gaps have been eradicated.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements at the college are well established and effective in promoting improvements. Governors are committed to the success of the college, they value its involvement in the community and have worked effectively with senior leaders and partners to redefine the strategic direction of the college. They have high expectations of their leaders, managers, staff and learners.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement at the college. They provide strong challenge and hold senior leaders to account well. They ensure that suitable plans for improvement are effective for the small minority of remaining areas of underperformance. Governors gain an enhanced understanding of the provision through their regular interaction with leaders, managers, teachers and learners.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, managers and staff place a high priority on the safety of learners and apprentices. All staff gain a deeper understanding through attending regular safeguarding training appropriate to their job roles. They use their knowledge well to enable learners to study in a safe and supportive environment. As a consequence, learners feel safe and are safe.
- Leaders maintain, update regularly and put into practice effective policies and procedures and ensure that learners and apprentices are safe at all times. Good relationships with external agencies ensure that referrals are seen through to a suitable and effective conclusion.
- A high proportion of younger learners have a good awareness of the possible threats from radicalisation or extremist groups. However, too many adults do not have a sound understanding of the dangers of extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and staff have implemented a very effective learning strategy, which places high expectations on teachers to enable their learners to excel. The large majority of teachers provide effective teaching, learning and assessment which results in the large majority of learners making good progress.
- Teachers plan their lessons well, taking into account the diverse needs and abilities of learners. They provide tasks that are engaging and purposeful and that enable their learners to progress. Teachers routinely include extension activities that challenge learners to expand their understanding and knowledge. On adult programmes, teachers provide effective tasks and activities that build upon learners' prior attainment and experience and enable them to advance their knowledge and skills.
- Activities generate purposeful discussion that enables learners to learn from the experiences of other learners' employment experience.
- Managers and the large majority of teachers foster a positive culture of learning through the development of learners' higher-order thinking skills. In health and social care, teachers set learners tasks, in which they apply good problem-solving skills, to identify

ways in which children learn to read. As a result, they gain a good understanding of the approaches they can deploy to enable children to learn.

- Many teachers have developed a very effective use of questioning techniques by probing and encouraging learners to reflect on their own learning; this reinforces learners' wider understanding of topics. Work-based tutors on childcare and business administration courses use questioning well to enable apprentices to explore aspects of employment in greater depth. In science lessons, teachers challenge learners to acquire a good understanding of the subtleties and relevance of hypotheses in scientific investigations.
- Learners and apprentices develop a good knowledge of key technical terms and language that enables them to improve their subject understanding. As a result, they make good use of their newly acquired vocabulary in assignments, become more articulate in discussions and apply their knowledge well. Civil-engineering learners learn how to make good use of their understanding of technical language by adapting procedural text for the general public.
- Teachers have good knowledge and relevant vocational experience. Apprentices benefit from the commercial and industrial experience of their work-based tutors, who organise learning well with employers. Consequently, apprentices improve their knowledge and understanding of their job role and gain the practical skills and behaviours required by employers. Learners studying art and design benefit from the knowledge and skills of practising artists, which help them to create and produce high-quality drawings, artefacts and visual media.
- Learners maximise the extensive opportunities to engage with learning technologies; they use these well and become more independent in their learning. Adult learners use well the online information provided by teachers in enabling them to explore topics in more depth and with greater independence. However, a small minority of learners do not use their independent study time productively, and so do not make the progress that they could.
- The arrangements for the setting and monitoring of learners' targets are good. Teachers inspire learners to aim as high as possible and make rapid progress. Learners and teachers use the recently introduced tracking system effectively. As a result, learners have a better understanding of the progress they are making. However, targets set and agreed with apprentices focus too much on the completion of tasks and units rather than on wider employment skills. Targets agreed with learners with high needs are too broad and not specific enough.
- Some teaching needs to improve. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of what learners can achieve are low, with a lack of challenge. Learners become disengaged, and teachers do not check learning or progress sufficiently. Teachers in a small minority of adult programmes do not provide instructions that are sufficiently clear, so learners are not clear what is expected of them.
- Teachers on adult learning courses, particularly in engineering, promote mathematics well. Learners with high needs gain good written literacy and numeracy skills. However, too few teachers of study programmes and apprenticeships promote the value of English and mathematics in vocational lessons and enable learners and apprentices to improve their written English skills or their mathematical problem-solving skills. Not enough teachers of both discrete GCSE and functional skills courses take sufficient account of learners' starting points to provide tasks that enable learners to augment their English

and mathematics skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Leaders, managers, teachers and staff promote an inclusive ethos in which learners respect each other and their teachers. Consequently, learners have a good understanding and contribute well in discussions on topics such as stereotyping, religious discrimination and equality.
- Learners enjoy their learning, work hard in lessons and most make good progress developing their skills and knowledge. Learners are polite, well behaved and improve their personal, social and employability skills effectively in lessons.
- Learners and apprentices take part in a wide variety of activities which increase their awareness and understanding of how to contribute successfully to life in modern Britain. They have a very secure understanding of British values, supported well by achieving a bespoke qualification in this topic.
- The majority of learners produce good standards of theory work and gain good standards and an appreciation of the practical skills employers need in the local and regional area. Most apprentices improve their practical skills and make a significant contribution to their workplace.
- Most learners benefit from external work experience, which helps to improve their work-related skills. Learners use the good practical skills gained at the college to contribute well to employers' business. Teachers set clear targets and expectations for their learners' work experience. Learners self-assess their skills both before and after their work placement and their records show improvements in job-specific skills and skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and communication during their time at work.
- Curriculum teams work well with employers to provide learners with a large range of work-related learning opportunities as part of their assessment. For example, learners on media courses produce films and submit them for selection to a local film festival. An internationally recognised film director helps these learners aspire to professional expectations in their film production. In addition, learners volunteer to assist in the running of the festival and consequently gain improved communication and organising skills.
- Learners enrolled on business and public service study programmes gain good employability skills and develop effectively their personal and social skills through volunteering in the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme. The college has been awarded the 'NCS Champion' award, because of the large number of learners who benefit from undertaking social action projects with the NCS, for example helping out in care homes, fundraising for charities and providing food and clothes for local homeless people.
- Learners' attendance in most lessons is good. However, learners' attendance in discrete English and mathematics lessons is low. As a result, younger learners make slow progress in improving their written English and developing their mathematical problem-solving skills.
- Learners with high needs, including those with significant anxiety issues, are supported well to grow in independence and confidence. As a result, they make good progress developing practical skills, numeracy and their vocabulary. They develop employability

and social skills in realistic learning environments and appreciate the importance of working to industry standards and how working well as a team brings about positive outcomes. However, they do not benefit from accessing supported internships to provide a useful route into employment.

- Learners feel safe and work safely, including in the correct use of appropriate personal protective equipment in practical workshops. Learners have a good understanding of how to keep safe online. However, adult learners do not have a sufficient understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.
- Learners benefit from good advice and guidance and are clear about the next steps available to them. New learners value the opportunity to spend time at the college during the summer break, so that they became accustomed to the environment and become familiar with the staff. Learners with additional learning needs visit the college during the year, in preparation for transition to college from school. As a result, most learners enjoy their studies and progress into further education or employment.
- Only a small minority of learners participate in a wide range of sporting and fitness activities provided by staff at the college. Consequently, not enough learners take opportunities to improve their health and fitness.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The large majority of learners, adults and apprentices make good progress. Leaders' data for the previous year indicates that the majority of apprentices and the large majority of learners complete their qualifications and make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Most learners now complete and improve their study skills, and skills valued by employers while gaining qualifications. Leaders' data indicates that the majority of adult learners improve and gain appropriate English skills and qualifications. However, only a minority of adult learners improve their mathematics skills and gain appropriate qualifications.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications. The number of apprentices who complete within their planned timescale is broadly in line with similar providers nationally. However, the proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18 who achieve within their planned timescales is lower than that of their older peers.
- Learners with high needs produce work of a high standard and almost all achieve their targets and qualifications well. Almost all gain employment or an apprenticeship or progress to higher-level courses at the college or elsewhere. A small and increasing proportion benefit from meaningful work experience with local organisations.
- A significant proportion of learners achieve additional qualifications that help improve their effectiveness in the workplace, for example learners study qualifications in British values and internet safety, and hair and beauty learners complete contact dermatitis courses, which raise their awareness of working safely with harmful chemicals.
- Leaders have been effective in ensuring that achievement gaps between different groups of learners are reduced. There are no significant differences between different groups of learners. Male learners now achieve at a similar rate to females and learners with high needs on mainstream programmes achieve as well as their peers. However, leaders are aware of a small achievement gap between the small number of Black African/Caribbean

learners and their peers.

- Most learners and apprentices progress to a positive destination on completion of their programmes. The majority of study programme learners completing their studies at level 1 and level 2 progress to a higher level of learning either at the college or elsewhere, while most of the remainder gain employment or an apprenticeship. Almost all apprentices remain in employment and a high proportion take on extra responsibility at work or gain promotions.
- The proportion of learners who study English and mathematics GCSE qualifications and gain high grades has increased over the last three years. However, while leaders' data indicates the proportion achieving A* to C grades in 2016/17 to be above that of similar colleges, it remains low.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Governors and senior leaders have ensured that the principles of study programmes are met. The college provides study programmes for around 1,900 learners on a broad range of vocational programmes and subject areas from entry level to level 3; just over half study at level 3, with the remainder split evenly between levels 1 and 2. Learners study English and mathematics on functional skills or GCSE courses appropriate to their prior attainment. Learners enjoy their learning and the large majority achieve their academic and vocational qualifications.
- Leaders promote high expectations through the use of useful systems to measure learners' progress and attainment, and make effective interventions when learners fall behind. As a consequence, the large majority of learners make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. Leaders and managers predict outcomes for learners accurately, providing good capacity to make further improvements in the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications.
- Teachers plan learning well. Most learners make good progress in lessons that use an appropriate range of creative resources and tasks to effectively meet individual learners' needs. For example, in a public services lesson, learners increase their understanding of custodial care well by using thoughtfully designed case studies, matched to their levels of ability, that stimulate lively discussion and debate.
- Learners develop good practical and personal skills and knowledge, and technical vocabulary that prepare them well for further study or employment. For example, film and TV learners describe and recreate sound effects confidently. Learners on animation courses talk assuredly about the number of frames per second needed to create the impression of movement. The large majority of teachers set challenging and effective targets that promote learners' hard work in lessons. However, although target-setting for the large majority of learners is good, the use of session-based targets for supported learners is less effective.
- The large majority of learners benefit from well-organised work experience which enables them to gain good work-related skills, well matched to their career aspirations. Consequently, they develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours that will support them in

further study, or assure their value to their future employers.

- Learners develop their personal, social and employability skills well. Learners establish helpful working relationships with their tutors, peers and staff. For example, in a sports coaching session, learners worked well together to share their knowledge by comparing approaches to coaching young people and children. Construction and brickwork learners at all levels work in an environment of mutual respect and follow their teachers' instructions carefully.
- Too many learners make basic spelling and grammatical errors in their written work and do not improve their use of English, which would help them in their quest for future employment. Not all teachers model high standards in their own use of English for learners to follow, and too many teachers do not check and correct learners' written work carefully enough.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- A total of 361 adult learners were enrolled on a range of courses at the time of the inspection. The majority study level 3 access courses, a small minority are enrolled on level 1 with the remainder studying level 2 provision. Learners make good progress in subjects such as access to higher education, accountancy, electrical installation and construction. Leaders and managers work effectively to provide opportunities for those learners least likely to participate in education and learning to overcome barriers to learning. Consequently, a good proportion of learners progress to higher-level qualifications or gain meaningful employment relevant to their personal circumstances.
- Managers and teachers have good relationships with partners, such as local employer networks, local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, employers and community organisations to ensure that the provision is relevant to local employment needs and supports local and national priorities. Leaders use funding well to ensure that learning programmes and projects develop stronger communities and routes into employment.
- The large majority of learners make good progress from their individual starting points. Learners gain valuable personal, social and work-related skills and attitudes valued by employers. Teachers support their learners well. They provide activities to ensure that learners work hard and develop positive attitudes to break down any barriers to learning. For example, teachers in electrical technical subjects break down mathematical formulae well to help learners solve complex problems.
- Most teachers make good use of assessment to monitor the progress of learners. Teachers provide effective and helpful feedback on how learners can improve their work and achieve better outcomes. Learners improve their communication skills well by providing peer assessment feedback, they develop good relationships with each other. For example, they pool their knowledge and skills to advise each other well on their next steps into further learning or employment.
- Learners gain and appreciate the development of skills valued by employers. A good proportion of learners add to their work skills set, gain promotions or access new work opportunities. For example, a pipe fitter is now confident and qualified to undertake electrical installation projects at work.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Governors and senior leaders have ensured that the requirements for apprenticeships are met. The very large majority of apprentices remain on apprenticeship frameworks, with a few working towards the completion of recently introduced standards-based apprenticeships with employers in electrical installation, accountancy, hairdressing and customer service.
- Around 340 apprentices were on programmes at the time of the inspection, the large majority following advanced apprenticeships programmes with the remainder either enrolled on intermediate programmes or studying higher apprenticeship programmes. The largest volume of apprentices work in electrical technical settings and in schools, supporting teaching and learning.
- Work-based tutors and managers have very productive relationships with employers, planning training and assessment that matches business needs. For example, in electrical technical programmes, staff and employers design training to meet the needs of a particularly large local employer. This improves the competitiveness of the employer as the skilled apprentices are able to work alongside more experienced workers and learn from them. Staff work very assiduously with local headteachers to ensure that they recruit, support and progress highly motivated apprentices to become competent classroom assistants. A very large majority of classroom assistants progress to university to become teachers.
- Most adult apprentices make good or better progress. However, not enough apprentices aged 16 to 18 complete their programmes within their planned timescales. In response to this, managers and work-based tutors have improved the frequency of their reviews and now monitor and track apprentices' progress well. Consequently, the proportion of apprentices making good progress and completing their programme successfully has increased since the previous inspection.
- Work-based tutors and teachers have good experience in their respective industries and are well qualified. They use their knowledge and life experience well to communicate their passion to apprentices to develop their craft and take pride in their work.
- As a result of sharing their up-to-date knowledge and skills, apprentices advance their standards of work and technical skills. However, managers do not systematically encourage staff to update their vocational skills. Consequently, not all work-based tutors and teachers take proactive steps to keep ahead of developments in their industries.
- Most apprentices improve their knowledge, integrate well into the workplace and add value to employers' businesses. For example, customer service apprentices provide engineers with their work schedules, and deal with customer queries and complaints with confidence. Apprentice teaching assistants work effectively with teachers, develop their skills and help teachers provide individualised learning and support to children in classes.
- Work-based tutors provide useful feedback to apprentices on their progress and work. This helps apprentices validate their skills and build their confidence. The large majority of apprentices make good progress on the completion of their qualifications. However, targets set and agreed with apprentices and their employers concentrate too much on qualification achievement and completion and do not help them acquire the personal skills needed in their job roles. Too few work-based tutors encourage apprentices, through

discussion and target-setting, to consider the development of their personal skills in acquiring new knowledge and behaviours and how they apply to the workplace.

- Apprentices benefit from good advice and guidance. Information they receive from employers and college staff is effective in raising their awareness of progression routes to higher-level qualifications or possible promotions. Employers set high expectations for their apprentices, they ensure that apprentices are safe in the workplace and look to support them further in their careers.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- At the time of the inspection, 84 learners with high needs attended the college, almost all have education, health and care plans. The large majority study discrete supported study or extended learning programmes and a few are on mainstream vocational courses. Leaders and managers use their funding effectively to ensure that learners profit from specialist teaching, support and resources which aids their development of independent living skills.
- Learners develop independence and communication skills well that will support them in their future lives. Learners on discrete programmes benefit from the social aspects of college life and become more confident in speaking out and offering their opinion. For example, learners learn how eye contact and waiting for pauses in conversation is important to them socially. They enjoy coming to college and gain skills that will help them live more independent lives.
- Learners who study on programmes integrate well. Teachers and staff provide good support, and consequently they make the progress expected of them and make valuable contributions to discussions and activities.
- The majority of learners gain good and appropriate skills that are valued by employers. They have good access to work placements in the community where this is realistic and, as a result, interact well in society. When working in the college Bistro Café, they appreciate the importance of working to industry standards and how working well as a team brings about positive experiences for paying customers. Learners improve their enterprise skills effectively.
- Learners produce a range of items to sell in the wider college environment and develop basic business acumen in agreeing how much to sell goods for and how profits will be used. However, for a small minority of learners, leaders and managers have not introduced supported internships to enhance opportunities for sustainable employment.
- Learners with significant anxiety issues cope very well with their studies. Teachers and staff support them effectively to participate in college life; teachers and staff confidently, quietly and effectively diffuse incidents. Strategies to manage challenging situations are well established. Managers and staff work very well to integrate a few learners who have never accessed a learning environment previously and are taught at home as part of their transition into society and eventually to attend programmes at the college.
- Most learners improve their English and mathematics skills well. Teachers integrate literacy and numeracy effectively into learning activities. Learners are encouraged to develop their vocabulary, use technical language and spell words correctly. Teachers use practical skills effectively to enable learners to improve their numeracy skills. For example,

in a pottery lesson learners explained how clay makes different 2- and 3-D shapes.

- Teachers provide, and learners benefit from, effective specialist advice and guidance on future opportunities regarding further learning or employment. Learners gain confidence prior to joining the college by attending well-designed taster activities. These help to ensure that the transition into the college environment is seamless and a positive experience. Managers and teachers provide appropriate unobtrusive support from the start of a learner's programme. However, for a minority of learners strategies and information to support their needs are not shared adequately with their tutors. Consequently, a small proportion make slower progress than their peers.
- Teachers monitor learners' progress against their qualification outcomes well and almost all learners achieve their planned outcomes. The majority of learners make good progress and achieve as well as their peers. However, targets for learners with complex needs are too broad and not fully understood or challenging.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130679
Type of provider	Further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,232
Principal/CEO	Andy Sparks
Telephone number	01245 265611
Website	www.chelmsford.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)	320	103	497	65	1081	191	1	2
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	55	19	135	119	5	7		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for whom the provider receives high-needs funding	84							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

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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