

Lowestoft Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		28 April–1 May 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This college is good because:

- governors, leaders and managers have taken highly effective action to improve provision
- teaching, learning and assessment have much improved since the previous inspection
- students make good progress across a significant majority of courses due to very effective tracking and support processes that help them improve their work and achieve better grades
- teachers promote high aspirations and ambition well among students
- managers have developed a strong self-assessment culture that identifies weaknesses in provision accurately and uses data successfully to inform overall quality
- leaders and managers have strongly developed the curriculum to meet the very specific needs of learners, employers and the wider community
- good advice and guidance enable students to make well-informed choices about the subjects they study and progression opportunities available to them
- the college has a particularly inclusive environment where students enjoy their studies and behave well in a culture of mutual trust and respect.

This is not yet an outstanding college because:

- achievement rates for higher grades on a small minority of courses at level 3 require improvement
- teachers do not include mathematics sufficiently within subject areas to raise the standard of students' skills in this subject
- staff do not analyse students' starting points in relation to their personal, social and employability skills to improve teaching and learning
- actions following observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not focus sufficiently on improving the practice of individual teachers.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Increase students' attainment and progress in a small minority of subjects where these are still low by reviewing all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment; ensure students are set clear and stretching targets to help to improve their work so they know what they need to do to make further progress and achieve their full potential.
- Increase teachers' awareness and their ability to make the best of opportunities to include mathematics within subjects as part of their teaching practice.
- Ensure teachers plan for learning effectively so that all students develop the specific personal, social and employability skills that they need to achieve their intended goals.
- Ensure all teachers have individual action plans for improvement, related directly to the outcomes of their teaching, learning and assessment observation.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Most students are aged 16 to 19, on full-time study programmes and the very large majority study at level 3 on A-level or vocational programmes; the remainder study at level 2. Students who have not achieved a GCSE A* to C grade in either English or mathematics re-sit the appropriate GCSE or functional skills qualification as part of their study programme. Approximately 600 students enrol each year, the large majority of whom come from three local partner schools and with low prior attainment compared with those enrolling on similar courses at other providers.
- Outcomes for students are good. Between 2011/12 and 2013/14, students' success rates increased for all types of qualifications. Almost all students are successful in gaining A-level qualifications and most make at least the progress expected of them compared to their prior attainment. On AS-level qualifications in 2013/14, students' success rates dipped markedly from a much stronger position in 2012/13, mainly due to underperformance on a small number of subjects. However, students who were successful made at least the progress expected of them.
- Students' success rates on vocational courses at level 3 are high in most subjects, but low in a few including qualifications for health and social care and sports courses, mainly due to a higher than average proportion of students who did not complete their courses.
- In the current year, a much higher proportion of students remain on their courses compared to a similar point in 2013/14, particularly on AS-level courses and on vocational courses, due to managers successfully implementing a range of improvement actions. Students' attendance has increased and it is now good.
- The proportion of students who successfully gain a grade of A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics has increased and is high in mathematics and functional skills English. A large number of students are taking GCSEs in these subjects in the current year and most are making good progress towards achieving their target grades of C or higher.
- Students' progress in the current year indicates that almost all are making good or better progress with completing assessments and gaining skills.
- Teachers develop students' personal, social and employability skills well through a wide variety of activities including work experience, well-designed realistic working environments and enrichment activities, which students value highly. For example, the very large majority of sport students produce work of a high standard, critically analyse their own performance and work well in teams. In another example, students studying music technology develop good skills in

enterprise and communication by setting up their own record label and routinely organising music events for local bands. However, the assessment and development of the individual skills students need require further development.

- Students' behaviour is good. They are respectful to one another and considerate of others' needs. Students arrive on time to their lessons and are keen to learn and develop. As a result, they are gaining the relevant knowledge and understanding rapidly. Students' work is mostly of a good standard and reflects their commitment to their studies.
- In the current year, the gap in achievement between male and female students and between students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their peers is narrowing significantly. Managers' data show that student retention across these groups is broadly similar and monitoring of their progress indicates that they are achieving equally as well.
- Almost all students make progress into further study at a higher level or into employment. The large majority of students on courses at level 3 are successful in gaining university places and their progression rates to universities with high entry requirements have increased significantly. Two thirds of students who progress to university are first generation applicants with many examples of students overcoming significant barriers to learning to achieve a university place. All students on courses at level 2 move to courses at level 3 or gain employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Inspectors looked at teaching, learning and assessment in sport, performing and visual arts, English and modern foreign languages as a representative sample of the college's curriculum. Inspectors also looked at the teaching, learning and assessment in other subjects. They found improvements in the vast majority of the provision since the previous inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, managers and staff have improved teaching, learning and assessment. They are now good and ensure that almost all students are motivated and make at least good progress, with a minority making better than expected progress. In the current year, the better teaching, learning and assessment are ensuring students are making strong progress, have high levels of motivation and are developing self-confidence.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students. They are well qualified and use their subject knowledge extensively to help students understand their subject and to appreciate the relevance of what they are learning. For example, students studying mathematics benefit from the expertise of expert mathematicians to support their learning.
- Teachers' skilled use of questions and choice of learning activities help to extend students' knowledge and develop their skills well. For example, students attending an AS-level economics lesson are able to discuss in detail current affairs and the effect events such as a general election may have on the economy. The large majority of teachers encourage students to work together productively, including paired practical work in laboratories and by participating in peer assessment.
- Teachers plan lessons well and closely match their lessons to students' abilities. For example, in a forensic science lesson the teacher used a student-led plenary session to enable students to share confidently their thoughts and ideas of how best to achieve high grades in their set assignment. This allowed the teacher to intervene with additional guidance on the requirements for a high grade and support the session most effectively.
- In a very small minority of lessons, the pace is too sluggish and a lack of challenge for students slows the progress expected of them.
- Feedback to teachers, following observations of teaching, learning and assessment, and the actions to help them improve their practice, while successful in improving provision overall, does not focus sufficiently on a teacher's particular needs.

- Monitoring of students’ progress is good and it has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teachers, student achievement mentors and managers use an effective electronic tracking system to set rigorous academic and personal targets, to identify students’ areas of underperformance and provide them with precise improvement actions. Teachers and staff provide good pastoral support for students.
- Most assessment of students’ work is good. Thorough, prompt and accurate marking provides students with good oral and written feedback along with guidance on how to improve their work. In a few instances, recorded feedback requires further development.
- Classrooms, learning areas and resources are of a high standard and are very well equipped with modern technology and specialist resources. The provision of information learning technology (ILT) is very good both in and outside classrooms. Students are able to access ILT in communal areas well, which allows them to work freely on their directed independent learning tasks. Teachers and students often use ILT well, but in a few lessons, its innovative use is insufficient to improve further students’ ability to learn.
- Students make good use of the facilities in the open access areas. The virtual learning environment contains a range of subject learning material, including links to lesson notes that students can use for revision purposes. However, in a few subject areas teachers have not developed this area well.
- Advice and guidance for students are good at the start and during their time at the college. Managers and staff help students to clarify their academic and career aspirations at an early stage in their application to ensure that they make the appropriate choice of subjects to meet their progression intentions. Tutorials focus strongly on university applications as well as valuable topics relating to students’ personal and social development. However, applications for progression into employment, such as apprenticeships, are not of the same standard.
- Teachers encourage students’ use of subject specific terminology well in lessons and most students quickly become adept in oral communication. English students develop very good language skills and the checking of spelling, punctuation and grammar is routine in lessons in other subject areas.
- Students in, for example, performing and visual arts develop their mathematics skills to an appropriate level and teachers promote mathematics well in lessons. However, the introduction and inclusion of mathematics into lessons in other subject areas does not take place regularly. Teachers do not sufficiently help students expand their mathematics skills.
- Students benefit from a harmonious and inclusive learning environment. They have high levels of respect and tolerance for each other and their teachers. Teachers promote equality and diversity well in the majority of lessons. For example, students in health and social care are able to discuss confidently the protected characteristics of disability discrimination legislation.

Sport	
16-19 study programmes	Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in sport are good because:

- although student outcomes in 2013/14 required improvement, in the current year students are making good progress; retention and attendance are now high and considerably better, with most students achieving or exceeding their target grades, a significant improvement on previous years

- students quickly develop good sports leadership, coaching and practical skills and most develop a deep understanding of the theory; for example, students develop good employability skills when providing sporting activities for local school pupils
- enthusiastic teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve which motivates students very well; they ensure that all students do an appropriate amount of independent study and research
- students benefit from high standard, attractive and lively learning environments, with extensive displays including sports posters, careers information, subject-specific material and examples of students' work
- teachers know their students well and plan their learning experiences very effectively which improves students' learning and progress
- teachers use a good variety of reliable assessment methods in lessons to set individual learning goals and to reinforce learning
- teachers' assessment of students' work and progress is good; they provide detailed oral and written feedback to students and coupled with precise target setting, this ensures that students know what they need to do to improve their work
- students benefit strongly from the clear emphasis that teachers place on the precise and correct use of English; for example, in a sport vocational lesson, students examined their understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, resulting in work that contained complex language at an appropriate level and free of errors in terminology
- students receive good information, advice and guidance throughout their programme which help them select and undertake a study programme that matches their personal aspirations, such as the selection of different sports units and topics on their main programme
- teachers promote equality and diversity well; in discussions, students demonstrate respectful and balanced views, for example, when covering barriers to sporting participation by different groups.

Teaching, learning and assessment in sport are not yet outstanding because:

- managers have not focused on improving teachers skills sufficiently in order to develop students' mathematical skills in sports lessons
- teachers do not always make good use of ILT in lessons to improve learning further; for example, they make limited use of interactive resources that are available and typically used in sports lessons.

<p>Visual and performing arts</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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Teaching, learning and assessment in visual and performing are good because:

- outcomes have improved and they are now good, with a high proportion of students completing their courses successfully; current students are making improved progress from their starting points and their retention and attendance have significantly improved

- teachers set high standards and plan learning that matches students’ prior attainment and individual needs well, and helps students to progress confidently
- teachers make good use of a range of stimulating activities in all lessons to help explain design ideas and concepts; they check progress frequently; as a result, students are attentive and enjoy learning, arriving promptly and benefitting from the informal support that teachers provide
- teachers promote particularly effectively the use of peer critiquing to develop evaluating skills, and encourage students to share practice and ideas to aid their development
- students develop their critical and analytical skills well, which is further improved by visiting speakers and innovative educational visits, such as recent visits to Paris and Prague to analyse the work of established artists
- teachers use industry-standard specialist studios and activities well; this helps to develop high levels of performance in performing arts and music and good sketch books in art and design
- teachers’ assessment of students’ work is good; detailed feedback to students and precise use of targets ensures students know what they need to do to improve their work
- the teaching of mathematics is of a high standard; students are clear about the targets they are set and teachers encourage them to talk about their understanding of mathematics and its uses in their subject area
- teachers seamlessly introduce the promotion of equality and the understanding of diversity through well thought out projects for students to explore, which include cultural and historical awareness; students and teachers work together well in an atmosphere of respect.

Teaching, learning and assessment in visual and performing arts are not yet outstanding because:

- a minority of teachers do not make good use of technology to support learning; for example, they do not use it in an inspiring or creative way to improve students’ learning and development
- teachers do not routinely develop employability and industrial skills in art and design
- a small minority of lessons take place with too few students, which limits students’ opportunity to share different perspectives and refine understanding through group discussion.

English and modern foreign languages	
16-19 study programmes	Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in English and modern foreign languages are good because:

- teachers' high expectations help students achieve well and develop good personal and academic skills; students take pride in their work, attend well and punctually, make good progress during lessons, and produce final work of good quality
- teachers are motivational and help their students build self-belief, skilfully guiding them through a variety of literary genres and analysis of challenging texts; students achieve a sophisticated understanding of linguistic and literary features, and develop skills of critical textual analysis
- well-qualified teachers convey their subject with passion and plan stimulating and well-paced learning activities to spark interest; students develop effective language and communication skills, and present their own persuasive, insightful ideas and arguments confidently

- teachers coach students at lower levels of learning well, and students engage with a variety of texts, develop interpretations and the ability to evaluate how structure, grammar, details of language and presentation engage and affect their audience
- good use is made of interactive boards, laptops and mobile phones to explore texts and visual stimuli in lessons; students access the college's electronic learning facilities frequently to contribute in discussions relating to literary features on the students' forum, revise work or use wider reading
- teachers provide constructive feedback, with detailed guidance on how to improve work; this helps students improve their literacy and communication skills, and present good quality writing, with amendments and additions
- robust induction ensures that students have a clear understanding of what teachers expect from them; the effective guidance helps students to make suitable choices, raise aspirations and progress onto other study in further or higher education, and employment
- staff provide very effective academic and personal support for their students and this helps students to build resilience, reach their potential, complete their qualifications and achieve well
- staff provide a very inclusive learning environment based on trust and respect; students express their opinions freely on challenging themes such as oppressive ideologies, gender and racial discrimination, and sexual orientation; this helps them to broaden their knowledge of the wider world.

Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet outstanding because:

- teachers do not provide extension activities systematically to challenge their more able students; as a result, these students waste time waiting for peers to finish their tasks
- teachers do not plan activities that promote collaborative work sufficiently, to maximise team-working and student interaction and to promote strong peer support.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leadership and management are good. Since the previous inspection, all staff and governors have worked tirelessly to improve teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, students now receive a much better education. Leaders and managers have high aspirations for students, a clear vision for the college and are strongly committed to providing an outstanding experience for students. Staff at all levels share this ambition and use it to motivate their learners to succeed.
- Governance is good. Governors know the college well and the community it serves. They check data frequently and carefully, and have a strong focus on providing challenge to improve provision. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and use this information well to hold senior managers to account.
- Curriculum development is effective at meeting the needs of the local area. In response to the low GCSE success achieved by students at local schools, managers have increased the availability of GCSE programmes and introduced a programme at level 2 that enables students to develop the skills and qualifications they will need to access higher learning in both academic and vocational study programmes.
- Self-assessment is good. Leaders and managers use a wide range of data to evaluate the quality of provision accurately and honestly. They have successfully devised and implemented particularly well a detailed and appropriate action plan to resolve areas of weakness resulting in improvements for students.

- Managers' use of data to improve performance is good. Target setting is effective and managers monitor progress on a weekly basis. They quickly put in place effective support when issues with performance occur. As a result, the quality of provision is now more consistent and retention and attendance have improved, with only a few areas where performance does not meet the appropriate level.
- Management of staff performance is good and links well to the observation of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have high expectations of staff, which they translate into realistic targets to improve provision and the students' experience. However, a small minority of targets in reviews are not sufficiently clear or time bound. Managers use capability procedures effectively to support teachers to improve their performance and to ensure that poorly performing teachers leave the college.
- The observation of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Observers identify the key strengths and areas for improvement accurately and in the majority of cases provide teachers with detailed feedback on what they need to do to improve. Staff development activities focus heavily on raising teachers' performance and maximising success for students. However, many of the development opportunities cover the common themes observers identify through observations and do not specifically focus on teachers' individual needs.
- Managers have prioritised the development of students' English and mathematics effectively. All students who do not have a GCSE grade A* to C are enrolled on an appropriate programme. Extensive staff development has resulted in the effective inclusion of English in subject areas. However, the development of teachers' skills to include mathematics in lessons remains an area for improvement.
- Managers have a good understanding of equality and diversity and promote an inclusive and supportive learning environment effectively, where students and staff feel valued and feel safe. Managers and teachers monitor the performance of different groups of students well and they have been very effective in reducing achievement gaps. Staff receive relevant and up-to-date training to support and extend their knowledge in promoting inclusion, equality and diversity in lessons and use these to develop students' understanding and tolerance of others' beliefs and values.
- Arrangements for safeguarding students are good. The regular training for this area is highly effective. All staff know how to recognise and respond to issues relating to the safety of students and they provide support through a wide range of professional services promptly, including counsellors and mental health workers. Managers review records of intervention activities meticulously and routinely. They maintain very good links with the multi-agency safeguarding hub, and with agencies that support looked-after children and young people leaving care.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Lowestoft Sixth Form College

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2			2					
Outcomes for learners	2			2					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2			2					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2			2					

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Sport	2
Visual arts	2
Performing arts	2
English	2
Modern foreign languages	2

College details

Type of provider	Sixth form college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	576							
Principal/CEO	Yolanda Botham							
Date of previous inspection	January 2014							
Website address	www.lowestoftsfc.ac.uk							
College information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	67	N/A	476	4	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the college contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A 							

Contextual information

Lowestoft Sixth Form College shares a campus with Lowestoft College, the town's general further education college. The large majority of learners are from three local partner schools. Around 600 students enrol each year, the vast majority of whom are aged 16 to 18. The college offers courses at A- and AS-level in 31 subjects and vocational courses at level 3 in six subjects. A course at level 2, based on developing skills for work alongside vocational options, and a range of GCSE courses are also part of the curriculum. In Suffolk, the proportion of pupils aged 16 achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is well below average. Lowestoft town has high levels of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low and similar to the proportions within the Suffolk population.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Shane Langthorne HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store Street](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

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