

Inspection dates	17–20 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualification is not yet high enough, or consistently good enough across different subjects and levels.
- Teachers do not yet have high enough expectations of their learners, especially in classroom-based lessons, and learners do not always produce work of a high standard.
- Arrangements for managers to monitor actions for improvement are too complex and have hindered progress.
- Learners' achievement of English and mathematics qualifications is too low; teaching of these subjects in lessons is not effective. Teachers do not always help learners develop their English and mathematical skills in vocational lessons.
- Governors have not monitored the educational performance of the college or challenged poor performance well enough.
- Managers have not been held sufficiently to account by senior leaders for the slow pace of improvement and for poor performance.

The provider has the following strengths

- Good provision exists for apprentices, adult learners and learners with high needs.
- Learners benefit from good and productive links with employers, the local enterprise partnership (LEP) and other local and regional stakeholders.
- Learners feel safe; they value the inclusive and welcoming atmosphere of the college and the culture of tolerance and respect.
- Good facilities and resources enable learners to work to industry standards.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Chelmsford College is a general further education college that offers study programmes for 16–19-year-old learners, courses for adults, apprenticeships and provision for high-needs learners. Courses are offered in almost all subject areas; the largest subject areas are construction, creative and visual arts and business management. The college recruits learners from across Essex. Around 3,500 learners study at the college with about 2,000 learners aged 16 to 19 on study programme courses, about 1,000 adult learners and about 330 apprentices. Around 70 learners are in receipt of high-needs funding. The college also has learners on higher education programmes in construction and civil engineering. No learners were studying on subcontracted provision at the time of this inspection. Governors appointed a new Principal in August 2014.
- Situated in the city of Chelmsford, the college operates from three sites, each with specialist accommodation for the teaching of vocational subjects. The local area has lower than average levels of unemployment and the proportion of learners who achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C is around the national rate and higher than the rate for the East of England. The proportion of learners of minority ethnic heritage is around the same as the proportion of minority ethnic residents in the local population.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment further, by:
 - ensuring that the quality assurance of lessons and of learners' work focuses not just on the progress that learners are making but also on the standard of their work
 - training teachers to give feedback on learners' work that is more critically constructive and pays greater attention to the quality of written work, including the use of English and the accuracy of mathematics
 - raising standards in lessons, and in assessment centres, by insisting that learners are ready to learn and use all of their time productively
 - setting precise targets for learners that are focused explicitly on helping learners to improve their underpinning knowledge, skills and understanding in the specific subject
 - improving teaching in English and mathematics by ensuring that learners' specific skills gaps are identified and tackled, and that learners do more independent work to reinforce the work they have done in lessons
 - training teachers to maximise learners' progress by taking greater account of learners' prior attainment and assessments of their potential.
- Put in place clearer accountability for managers at all levels, so that all have high expectations, are able to drive rapid improvement and reduce inconsistent performance, by ensuring that:
 - all managers have clear personal appraisal objectives, understand their key priorities for improvement, and are held firmly to account by leaders
 - the current restructure is completed urgently to create clearer lines of responsibility and clearly defined leadership for the provision of English and mathematics
 - all managers set sharply focused, prioritised targets for improvement in their areas of work, with ambitious timescales and meaningful measures
 - managers at all levels relentlessly scrutinise the degree to which their actions are improving learners' outcomes and learning experience, and the rate of this improvement.
- Ensure that governors strengthen their oversight of the college's educational activity by being more forensic in their analysis of learners' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; they must hold senior leaders and managers to account where the pace of improvement is too slow.
- Make sure that managers reduce the complexity of the various electronic systems used to monitor learners' progress and improvements in the quality of provision.
- Improve the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications, including those for English and mathematics, by setting them clear and ambitious targets for achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have not improved the quality of provision or outcomes for learners quickly enough. Leaders' and managers' actions have brought about improvements in apprenticeship provision, adult learning programmes and for those learners with high needs. However, as a result of continued inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, too many learners are not making the progress of which they are capable, particularly on study programmes for 16–19-year-olds.
- The new Principal and governing body have taken swift action to ensure good, steady progress in remedying the college's poor financial health. They understand the college's weaknesses and priorities and the need to increase rapidly the rate of overall improvement.
- The Principal has improved communication with staff and is taking steps to strengthen the capacity of senior and middle managers, so that all college leaders promote high expectations and manage their teams effectively. A carefully considered management restructure, designed to clarify and increase the accountability of managers at all levels for the quality of provision, is well underway.
- Managers have strengthened their monitoring of learning in lessons. Most observers identify accurately what teachers need to do to improve. However, in too many cases the implementation of development actions and/or support from advanced practitioners has yet to secure substantial improvements to teaching and learning on study programmes. Managers have ensured that the vast majority of staff now undergo appraisals of their performance, but few of these lead to sharp, measurable objectives which help staff to improve and are monitored thoroughly. As a result, leaders and managers are not able to hold staff sufficiently to account.
- Leaders' and managers' oversight of English and mathematics courses throughout 2014/15 was ineffective. As a result, the proportion of learners achieving GCSE A* to C grades for English and mathematics, and passing functional skills qualifications, declined further. Senior leaders are taking firmer remedial action to strengthen the management of this provision in order to bring about swift improvement for 2015/16. The college's 'Maths and English – Take it Seriously' campaign, launched in September 2015, is already raising learners' awareness of the importance of these core subjects.
- In most cases, managers evaluate accurately the quality of their provision through self-assessment and understand the key priorities required to improve further. However, managers' subsequent action planning to bring about improvements is not rigorous enough across all areas of the college. In addition, electronic systems for monitoring progress against action plans are over-complicated and do not provide managers with clarity about the full impact of their actions.
- Collaboration with community, educational and business partners, including the LEP, remains a significant strength of the college. Managers continue to work well with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that courses and progression routes for learners reflect most of the county's priorities for growth and align to local skill shortages. For example, managers have been working with a local engineering employer to develop and run higher-level apprenticeships to meet the demands of the local labour market.
- The management of adult learning is mostly effective. Achievements overall are high but mask lower learner achievement at levels 2 and 3. Teaching and learning are good in the majority of lessons, but the quality of learners' targets and teachers' written feedback are not consistently good.
- Apprenticeships are managed well. The number of apprentices has more than doubled since the previous inspection and managers have taken effective action to improve teaching and learning. This has resulted in improving outcomes for apprentices, particularly the marked improvement in outcomes for hairdressing and beauty therapy apprenticeships in 2014/15.
- The number of high-needs learners with more complex needs has grown by around a third since the previous inspection. Leaders have managed this growth and the provision well. However, managers tend to overemphasise the strengths of this provision and not identify areas of weakness well enough when they review its quality.
- The college continues to offer a safe and harmonious environment for learners. Cross-college events to celebrate diversity reinforce effectively to learners the importance of understanding the diverse community in which they live and work; they help to increase learners' understanding and appreciation of different faiths, beliefs and backgrounds. However, too many teachers have yet to help learners develop their understanding of these topics well enough in lessons. Assessors now help apprentices improve their understanding of diversity in their progress reviews well.
- Managers' actions to reduce the differences in achievement between various groups of learners have met with mixed success. For example, managers are successfully closing the achievement gap between

looked-after children and their peers, but the difference in achievement remains too wide. The majority of disabled learners and those with learning difficulties are prepared effectively to live and work more independently when they complete their studies.

■ **The governance of the provider**

- Governors' monitoring of the college's educational performance has improved but is not yet sufficiently rigorous. For example, governors are now asking far more questions of senior leaders but acknowledge they need to probe and challenge managers and leaders much more if they are going to help them to bring about swifter improvement.
- Governors bring a wide range of skills and experience to the board, although until recently they lacked sufficient expertise in further education performance. A governor with experience of apprenticeships now provides greater overview of the college's improving apprenticeship provision. The board has rightly identified the need to seek more employer representation.
- Governors' monitoring of steps to improve the provision and outcomes in English and mathematics throughout 2014/15 was poor. Governors are now fully cognisant of the college's key priorities and the urgent need to accelerate improvement.
- The financial position of the college has improved recently as a consequence of judicious financial management designed to minimise the impact on the quality of provision.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Managers responsible for overseeing the college's statutory duty for safeguarding, including safer recruitment and other checks on staff suitability, keep detailed records and monitor these thoroughly.
- Managers oversee health and safety practice effectively and ensure that staff and learners adopt safe working practices throughout their learning.
- Holistic support services ensure that all learners are safe, including the most vulnerable, and are wide-ranging and effective. Staff pay particular good attention to supporting learners' mental health and personal safety. The number of reported incidents of bullying is low.
- Leaders and governors have made a positive start in implementing the Prevent duty. All staff have been trained, and links with relevant external bodies are good. Learning on e-safety is particularly well promoted and comprehensive. However, learners' awareness of explicit risks arising from those who may wish to promote extremist views has not yet been raised sufficiently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Learners do not always make as much progress as they should because of the variable quality of teaching, learning and assessment. On 16 to 19 study programmes, too often teachers do not have high enough expectations of the standard of work that learners should be doing, both in and out of lessons. Although the vast majority of teachers are competent practitioners, too much of the work they give to learners is at too low a level, especially on level 3 courses.
- The large majority of learners achieve their main qualifications and progress successfully to further training, employment or higher education; however, too many do not realise their full potential. On GCSE courses in English and mathematics, most learners are not making sufficient progress to reach the level necessary to achieve a grade C or higher.
- In all types of provision, learners make better progress in practical lessons than in classroom-based theory sessions. In many vocational lessons, for example in hospitality, carpentry, and hairdressing, learners work to a high standard and develop their practical skills rapidly under expert guidance from their teachers; many teachers use individual coaching very well to encourage learners to evaluate their final products critically. In a number of traditionally male subject areas, both male and female learners benefit from the strong role models presented by female teachers. Learners benefit from access to high-quality facilities and resources in vocational areas.
- By contrast, too many classroom-based lessons are lacklustre and are characterised by learners working too slowly and at too low a level. The attitudes of a minority of learners are less positive; for example, they do not remove their coats or pay full attention in lessons, and teachers do not always insist on high standards. Although learners do learn new skills and knowledge, too often their learning is either slow or shallow. For example, in a significant minority of level 3 lessons, learners carry out research and complete tasks that present little challenge to those of average or higher ability. A minority of teachers struggle to ensure that all learners in very large groups stay focused on learning.
- The vast majority of adult learners make good progress as a consequence of teaching and support that

are very effective in building their self-confidence and helping them to develop appropriate vocational or academic skills and knowledge. Apprentices benefit from good individual coaching from work-based tutors, although off-the-job training does not make sufficient links to apprentices' experiences at work.

- Arrangements to improve further the quality of teaching are based on a sound mix of lesson observations supported by staff training. While observers rightly focus on the progress that learners make, they do not pay sufficient attention to the standard of their work.
- Most learners make insufficient progress in improving their English and mathematics, particularly on GCSE courses. Although the profile of these subjects has been raised throughout the college, strategies to raise standards are yet to have enough impact. In GCSE mathematics, although there is some good practice, in most lessons all learners do the same work without teachers identifying, and remedying, the specific difficulties that individual learners have with the subject. In English GCSE, standards of written and oral work are too low. In both subjects, learners do not spend enough time practising and improving their skills outside lessons.
- Many full-time learners benefit from timetabled sessions in assessment centres, where they work independently to improve their skills for employment, refine their coursework, or conduct research. Learners benefit from a plentiful array of resources available on the virtual learning environment to help them with their work, including an application that they can use on their mobile telephones to update their progress records. However, a significant minority of learners in these sessions do not work productively and do not receive sufficient encouragement to make best use of the time.
- The targets that teachers agree with learners to help them to achieve their potential frequently lack both precision and ambition, particularly on study programmes and in discrete high-needs provision. Far too often, all learners share the same targets; frequently these focus on behaviour, attitude or task completion rather than on vocational or academic skills development.
- The feedback that learners receive on their work ranges in quality from excellent to poor. Most apprentices receive detailed verbal and written feedback. Many adult learners on access to higher education courses benefit from teachers' close analysis of their work. However, on study programmes, teachers' positive written feedback is not always justified by the standard of the work that is being commented upon. Errors in sentence construction, grammar and clarity of expression are frequently neither identified nor corrected.
- Learning support assistants are deployed well, and demonstrate good skills in supporting learners who need extra help. In a minority of instances, learners with high needs receive too much support, slowing their progress towards independence. Learners at risk of leaving or failing their courses are monitored assiduously; staff do all that they can to keep them on track.
- Tutorial support is variable in quality, although full-time learners benefit from some interesting group tutorials focusing on different aspects of citizenship. A minority of teachers give learners opportunities to debate controversial issues, although others lack the confidence or skill to prepare learners to live and work in a complex, multicultural society by raising their understanding of diversity.
- Most learners are on appropriate courses at the right level as a consequence of good advice and guidance. However, the information held on learners' prior attainment is rarely used to best effect in teaching and learning. Careers advice and guidance are well organised and effective in helping learners to consider the range of options open to them at the end of their courses.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

require improvement

- Teachers' development of learners' skills in English and mathematics is not always good enough. Lessons for qualifications in English and mathematics are not yet consistently good and too many teachers do not help learners develop their English and mathematical skills in vocational lessons. In the better examples, such as in carpentry, learners are able to convert units of measurement accurately to calculate the amount of materials required to complete a task. Apprentices use the English and mathematical skills relevant to their job roles confidently and accurately.
- The quality of learners' written work is not of the same high quality as their practical work. Too much work is not at the level of their course and a minority of learners do not take as much pride in the quality of their written work as they do in their practical work.
- Learners' attendance at lessons is improving and is good in the majority of subjects, including hairdressing and beauty therapy, media and childcare. Learners in a minority of subjects, for example business management, do not attend as frequently. Their rate of attendance at lessons in English and mathematics is too low and is lower than that for vocational lessons.
- Learners produce good quality practical work, using their newly acquired skills effectively. For example,

carpentry learners produce high-quality work using hand and power tools confidently and safely. The majority of learners are able to develop the skills they learn at college while on work experience placements in industry, during which they also improve their skills for work, such as timekeeping, teamwork and communication.

- Learners in receipt of high-needs funding develop good skills for work through volunteering projects and work placements within the college and in local businesses, with good support from tutors and job coaches. A good proportion of learners progress into employment as a result of these opportunities.
- Apprentices develop their practical skills and skills for work as a result of good on-the-job training. Employers value the skills their apprentices bring to their organisations and the majority of intermediate-level apprentices progress to advanced-level apprenticeships with their current or new employers as a result. The majority of apprentices gain additional qualifications in line with their career aspirations, including first aid qualifications, safeguarding and equality and diversity awards.
- Learners' behaviour around the college sites and in social spaces is very good. They respect each other and their environment, which is clean and well kept. Their behaviour in a minority of their theory and classroom-based lessons is not as good. Incidents of low-level disruption in lessons are too frequent and in too many cases teachers either do not challenge this behaviour or they do not challenge it effectively.
- Learners feel safe at college, in their work placements and in their work places. Incidents of bullying are very infrequent and learners are confident that staff would deal with any incidents of bullying swiftly and decisively. Learners know how to keep themselves safe in their daily lives and when online.
- Learners take part in a wide range of social, sporting and charity events which help them to develop skills such as team-working, and gain a greater understanding of the communities in which they live and work.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications varies too much for different subjects and different types of qualifications. Adult learners at level 1 achieve their qualifications at a much higher rate than learners on 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learners at levels 2 and 3. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications is improving but is still not high enough.
- Learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes in subjects such as hospitality and catering, and hairdressing and beauty therapy make good progress, and a high proportion of learners are successful. Learners in subjects such as engineering and child development are less successful at achieving their qualifications. Learners in receipt of high-needs funding on study programmes achieve their qualifications at the same rate as their peers.
- Very few learners who take GCSEs or functional skills qualifications in English or mathematics achieve their qualifications at a high enough level, particularly in GCSEs. Apprentices make better progress in improving their English and mathematical skills through their on- and off-the-job training.
- Managers have not yet been effective in reducing the differences in achievement between different groups of learners. For example, female learners on study programmes achieve their qualifications at a higher rate than their male peers. Disabled learners or those with a learning difficulty are less likely to achieve their qualifications than their non-disabled peers or those who do not have a learning difficulty.
- Learners taking qualifications at level 3 do not all make the progress and achieve the high grades of which they are capable. For example, learners studying subjects such as travel and tourism and engineering make very good progress from their starting points. Conversely, learners studying subjects such as public services and sport do not make the progress that their prior attainment indicates they should.
- The large majority of learners progress to positive destinations when they finish their course. Almost all learners on access to higher education courses are successful in progressing to university. The majority of learners aged 16 to 19 on level 1, 2 and 3 study programmes are supported well by staff to progress to employment, further courses at the next level and, for level 3 learners, to university.
- All learners on courses below level 1 who are in receipt of high-needs funding achieve personal progress qualifications. Tutors provide excellent support for these learners which helps the large majority to progress to a higher level course, to suitable training or towards more independent living.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The college provides study programmes in 13 out of 15 subject areas; the largest areas are sports, hospitality, and business. Currently 1,912 learners aged 16 to 19 attend the college, accounting for just over three quarters of the college's provision.
- Teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes are not yet consistently good. Learners find too many theory lessons dull and uninspiring. Teachers' expectations of what learners can achieve in these lessons are too low; the standard of learners' written work is variable and is not always at the level expected for the course they are studying.
- Teachers are not all sufficiently adept at setting targets for their learners. In too many cases, targets are about completing the work required to pass the qualification rather than the learning that will enable learners to achieve their full potential. In a minority of cases, the same target is set for the whole group.
- Teachers do not all help learners to develop their English and mathematics in vocational lessons. They do not always correct poor spelling, punctuation, grammar or inaccurate calculations when marking work. In the few better lessons, teachers effectively provide opportunities for learners to practise their skills in English and mathematics; for example, in a business lesson, learners were calculating distances in both miles and kilometres accurately and confidently.
- Teachers plan and teach practical lessons well. In these lessons, learners make good progress in developing relevant skills for work. For example, in carpentry lessons learners use machinery confidently to produce industry-standard products, and in catering lessons learners demonstrate a good standard of food preparation skills to deadlines.
- Well-motivated learners use the assessment centres, which are a key part of their study programmes, wisely and produce good work. However, less motivated learners do not use this opportunity to work hard and are occasionally disruptive. They are not always able to explain what they are doing and how it links to their course.
- Learners improve their practical skills and skills for work in well-organised work experience placements in subjects such as health and social care, and childcare. Travel and tourism learners benefit from the good links teachers have developed to enable them to work at a range of industry placements, including working roles at the World Travel Market. However, work experience is not as well established in other areas such as catering and hairdressing; a minority of learners have so far been out on placement. Learners in science and business are not aware of the work experience arrangements.
- Learners do not value tutorials or find them useful and challenging; as a result, they do not always participate in the planned activities. Group sizes are often too large to enable tutors to deal with some sensitive issues such as bullying. Teachers do not consistently reinforce high standards in terms of punctuality, and a minority of classes start late.
- Learners receive good careers advice and guidance when choosing their courses. They are clear about their future plans and the majority progress into appropriate employment or further and higher education.

Adult learning programmes

are good

- There are 670 adult learners studying full- and part-time vocational programmes in subjects such as hairdressing, electrical installation, carpentry, engineering, accounting and access to higher education. Learners with no prior English and mathematics qualifications at level 2 also work towards qualifications in these subjects.
- Skilled and knowledgeable teachers are effective role models for their respective industries and set high expectations for professional industry-related attitudes and behaviour. Learners develop good practical skills and attain appropriate mastery of technical expertise, for example in electrical engineering, where learners are able to produce high-level technical reports that comply with legislative requirements, and carry out complex calculations. In beauty therapy, learners use their expertise and customer service skills to assess and document clients' needs correctly.
- Learners receive good support from teachers to develop their language skills; they have a good grasp of technical terms and vocabulary. For example, beauty therapy learners record new terms in a glossary book, and access to higher education learners develop high-level skills in analysis and synthesis to inform the recording of their research reports. Staff use initial assessment to identify learners' weaker areas in English and mathematics; however, planning to develop these skills further is not consistent in all lessons.
- Teachers' guidance is highly effective in identifying learners' prior attainments and career aspirations, enabling learners to enrol on a course that will help them achieve their long-term career ambitions.

Teachers do not always use the results of initial assessment effectively to plan and teach lessons that enable all learners to achieve their full potential. However, informal support for learners ensures that learners remain focused and on target to achieve.

- Most learners display high levels of commitment and motivation; they have high rates of attendance. They complete their homework to the best of their ability and work well together. They make particularly good progress when supporting and evaluating each other's work, for example, when reviewing film clips and storyboards in media, and reviewing budget plans in accounting.
- The quality of teachers' oral feedback to learners is good; their written feedback is insufficiently detailed to provide learners with clear guidance on the precise steps they need to take to improve their work and achieve higher grades. Teachers' reviews of learners' progress fail to set challenging targets that promote higher level learning or support the development of independent learning skills.
- Employability courses improve the confidence of those with barriers to employment; they motivate learners and promote skills in how to seek and gain employment effectively. Many learners on these courses gain increased confidence and self-esteem; they achieve qualifications and progress to employment or apprenticeships.
- Teachers develop learners' awareness of diversity successfully. For example, in a civil engineering lesson, the tutor effectively linked a learner's question about the use of personal protective equipment to the wearing of religious dress.
- Learners enjoy their safe and friendly learning environment. They support and learn from their peers well, and develop effective long-term networks with their fellow learners. For example, access learners continue to provide peer support following progression to university, and non-British learners develop a peer support network that enables them to integrate into the community. In construction trades, learners share employment opportunities with peers to help each other find jobs.

Apprenticeships

are good

- The college has 336 apprentices, of whom 218 are aged 16 to 18, with the majority in engineering, business administration and childcare. A very small minority of apprentices are following programmes in construction, information and communication technology (ICT), hairdressing, hospitality and catering, warehousing, sport and supporting teaching in schools. More than half are advanced apprentices.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and increase their confidence while they are studying for their apprenticeships. They display high standards of professionalism and increase the level of responsibility in their job roles. They improve greatly their understanding of their employer's business and contribute well at work. For example, business administration apprentices take on additional responsibility for liaising with important customers to ensure timely delivery of large and complex orders.
- Apprentices receive good support during the frequent and well-planned visits from their work-based tutors and from contact between visits. Work-based tutors and employers collaborate effectively to provide flexible programmes that match apprentices' working patterns and workplace activities, ensuring good progress and support of apprentices. Work-based tutors give detailed oral feedback on apprentices' work, and the majority of work-based tutors ensure that apprentices receive detailed written feedback. Apprentices make good progress in their English, mathematical and ICT skills. They receive good support from work-based tutors and coaches to use these skills effectively at work.
- Apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance from a range of college staff to help ensure they choose an apprenticeship which matches their career aspirations and abilities. They improve their understanding of the opportunities available when they complete their apprenticeships from the good information, advice and guidance from assessors.
- Approximately half of apprentices attend off-the-job learning at the college. A minority of the lessons require further development to ensure that teachers link learning to apprentices' workplace experiences. Teachers fail to use a sufficient variety of learning activities to enliven lessons; in particular, the activities in theory lessons do not help all apprentices, especially the most able, to make good progress. Teachers and assessors make very little use of technology to support and develop apprentices' learning and assessment.
- A minority of reviews of apprentices' progress do not involve employers; not all employers have a detailed understanding of the progress their apprentices are making. The majority of work-based tutors set their apprentices clear targets for improvement, which are reviewed frequently; apprentices and employers do not always receive a copy of the targets so that they know what apprentices need to do to improve.
- A minority of work-based tutors fail to develop individualised learning plans for apprentices, particularly when groups of apprentices start at the same time. Target dates for these apprentices to achieve particular tasks are often the same, irrespective of apprentices' prior learning and opportunities in their workplace.

Provision for learners with high needs

is good

- The college has 69 learners with high needs on a range of courses. Fourteen learners are based in mainstream 16 to 19 programmes; eight follow 16 to 19 study programmes at entry level or level 1; and a large group of 42 adult learners attend on a part-time basis. The majority of part-time learners work in discrete provision while a small number of learners work offsite.
- In practical learning activities, learners make good progress towards independence, and work in both formal and informal settings. For example, learners learn to use community facilities to develop important life skills, and also learn to use the college refectory and navigate their learning environment independently.
- Job coaches and tutors use their very good links with local employers, training providers and volunteer projects to negotiate work experience placements for learners, based on their interests and skills. The majority of learners progress to further training, vocational courses and volunteer projects when they leave college. A few learners, who make the most progress, are successful in gaining paid employment.
- The quality of learning support for learners in discrete provision and on mainstream courses is good. Learning support assistants work well with learners to help them to understand teachers' expectations and stay on task throughout lessons. Staff support learners with respect; they understand the situations that cause anxiety and help learners learn to manage their own behaviour. At times, a few learners are over-supported and their rate of progress slows as a result.
- The quality of teaching and learning in non-practical activities needs further development. Teachers rely too much on worksheets which are completed by all learners in a group; as a result learners do not make the progress they should.
- Staff record learners' progress against learning targets reliably; however, when targets are achieved, teachers do not always update targets in a timely way so that learners move on at an appropriate pace.
- Staff provide good information, advice and guidance to learners and they use the information they have about learners' prior learning and skills well to plan courses with learners and their families. Very few learners are enrolled on to courses at a level they cannot manage educationally or socially. If this does occur, managers work effectively with learners, families and local services to devise individual courses around learners' interests.
- Learners and their families receive excellent support as they prepare to leave college. Learners work with staff, families and local services to identify their next step and this coordinated approach helps plans to run smoothly.

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,400
Principal/CEO	Mr Andy Sparks
Website address	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 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	137	116	598	162	1,177	213	0	22
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	102	32	116	86	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None at the time of this inspection 							

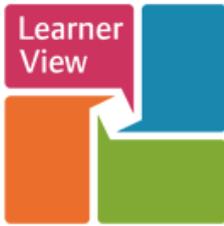
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Richard Pemble, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Hinchliffe	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Masterson	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Jacky Watt	Ofsted Inspector
Bernadette White	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. 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.

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