

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 November 2015

Mrs Karen Hucker
Principal
Bexhill 6th Form College
Penland Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN40 2JG

Dear Mrs Hucker

Short inspection of Bexhill 6th Form College

Following the short inspection on 14 and 15 October 2015 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the college was judged to be good in November 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

Your students continue to receive good quality education and training. Working closely and effectively together, leaders and governors successfully promote the college's vision, placing students and the local communities at the heart of the college's work. Students work in a friendly and harmonious environment and they feel safe and able to get on well with their studies. They often choose to come to the college because their peers, as well as parents of past and present students, have recommended it as a good place to study. Many of your students come to the college with low levels of previous attainment, having not done well at school, and they are quickly helped to improve and achieve.

In pursuit of becoming an 'outstanding' college, leaders, managers and staff are clear about the improvement priorities for the college and they have high expectations for themselves and their students.

With your governors, you keep under constant review the relevance of the college's work to the needs of students and employers. Your success in offering a relevant curriculum is reflected in the significantly increased enrolment of students, year on year. You have widened the range of courses in recent years, especially with the introduction of more vocational courses, leading to either direct employment or higher education. Most recently, hairdressing and catering courses have been

introduced. Employers are increasingly involved in helping to develop these and other courses.

You have implemented study programmes well. Effective advice and guidance and the wide range of academic and vocational courses available ensure that students choose a programme of study closely aligned to their needs and aspirations. Students improve their skills in English and mathematics and, where appropriate, are successful in improving their GCSE grades. Work experience, or work-related activities, are appropriately tailored to the level of students' needs and chosen career paths.

Students study on a vibrant and well-resourced single campus. Senior managers and governors, through their good management of resources, provide students with excellent accommodation, facilities and resources to support teaching and learning. For example, since the previous inspection, a purpose-built performance theatre is now available on campus for the college's performing arts academy and professional performances.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified significant strengths in the college's leadership and management, including leaders' and managers' good capacity to bring about further improvement. There were also areas for further improvement, including: increasing the proportion of good or better lessons to help improve students' progress and outcomes; ensuring that interactive technologies were fully available in lessons and used well by teachers to improve learning; better linking of tutorial activities to students' subjects of study; ensuring that self-assessment was comprehensively evaluative and led to improvement; and continuing to improve the skills of curriculum managers to drive forward improvement. You and your managers, and the hard-working staff, have made significant improvement in each of these areas.

Teaching, learning and assessment have improved. The training that teachers receive emphasises the benefits of sharing good practice, or of drawing on the expertise of colleagues, to help overcome difficulties in particular aspects of teaching and learning. This has led to teachers readily sharing their ideas and expertise, and peer observations becoming more widely used to improve teaching.

You have also improved teaching, learning and assessment through significant investment in information learning technologies (ILT) and in training to help teachers best use these. As a result, teachers use ILT routinely in lessons, to very good effect. They make increasingly sophisticated use of the college's virtual learning environment to support students, manage their assignment submissions and returns, and monitor students' progress. Tutorials are now valued by students and well used to help them and their teachers understand the progress they are making.

Curriculum managers and the heads of section are now at the centre of quality improvement. They make very effective use of comprehensive and highly evaluative self-assessment reports and action plans.

Safeguarding is effective.

You continue to ensure that the safeguarding of your students has the highest priority in the work of the college, and the good safeguarding identified at the previous inspection continues. A culture of safeguarding is embedded well in the life of the college and that of staff and students. Students are very well informed about safeguarding and it is constantly introduced and reinforced. All staff and governors understand why safeguarding is important and are thoroughly trained in the issues. Students feel safe, both within the college and when they are on work experience. Students speak particularly positively about the ways in which they are helped to stay safe. The Prevent agenda is well implemented and is well understood by leaders and managers. Students are well aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and speak positively about the advice and training they receive on the safe use of social media.

Inspection findings

- The leadership and management of the college continue to be good. Senior managers and governors have ensured that the quality of provision for students is good while working effectively to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Outcomes for learners remain good overall.
- Together with governors, you and your leadership team have further secured the place of the college within its local communities. Student numbers at the college have grown significantly year on year and many students travel considerable distances to attend the college due to its high reputation.
- The growth of the college, and its improved capacity to meet students' needs, is underpinned by senior managers' and governors' judicious management and use of resources. The significant investment in new buildings and information technologies has helped to improve the quality of provision for students and employers.
- The capacity of leaders and governors to drive forward continued improvement continues to be good. Your governors work closely and productively with you and your managers and set clear objectives and targets for improvement, which they monitor with rigour.
- Managers' self-assessment of the college's strengths and areas for further development has improved since the previous inspection. Improved and succinct student performance data are now well used by middle managers and their staff to improve the evaluative nature of self-assessments.
- Comprehensive self-assessment, with sharper judgements, enables accurate diagnosis of weaker areas and leads to further improvement in the quality of provision. You and your staff are well aware of the areas which need continuing attention. These include the underperformance in a minority of subjects, especially at AS level, and too much variation in how well students make progress based upon their starting points.

- Students continue to benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment. You and your managers have ensured that the weaker aspects noted at the previous inspection have been largely removed. At the same time, managers' and teachers' determination to improve teaching and learning is increasingly reflected in the success of lessons. Teachers' skills have been further developed to help them make better use of their time in lessons and to use the questioning of students more effectively to extend learning.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved as a result of teachers' highly effective use of ILT; since the previous inspection the infrastructure of information technology resources has been completed.
- Teachers now have a much better understanding of the extent of their students' progress in lessons, which is often good, and they use individual learning plans well to help students understand the progress they are making. Highly effective tutorials support students' understanding of their progress and their next steps.
- Leaders have implemented the requirements of study programmes well.

Next steps for the provider

In pursuit of their vision to be an 'outstanding' college, leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers continue to focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all students are stretched and challenged to achieve their full potential
- the progress of students, based upon their starting points when they join the college, is consistently well above expected levels
- the underperformance in the small minority of subjects, especially at AS level, is removed.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Martin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the Vice Principal as nominee. We met with you, your senior managers, a group of heads of section, a group of

students and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, including tutorials, and reviewed students' written work. We also spoke with students across the campus. We reviewed key college policies and documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We also considered the views of students, parents and employers.