

Short inspection of Bexhill College

Inspection dates:

6–7 November 2019

Outcome

Bexhill College continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Bexhill College is a large sixth-form college in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex. The college attracts students from a wide rural area around the coastal town of Bexhill as well as the urban areas in and around Bexhill itself.

Students join the college with a broad range of prior attainment at GCSE. A relatively high proportion have low prior attainment at GCSE. This part of the south coast is characterised by contrasting areas of affluence and significant deprivation. The college's student population reflects this socio-economic diversity. At the time of the inspection, the college had around 2,100 students. The vast majority are 16- to 18-year-olds studying full-time courses. Of these, over three quarters of them study on level 3 programmes, with the remainder studying at levels 1 and 2. The college offers A levels in 39 subjects and a wide range of vocational qualifications from levels 1 to 3.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students benefit from a curriculum offer that allows them to choose from a wide and varied combination of courses. While studying they have access to excellent resources to support their learning.

A large majority of students, in particular A-level students, make at least good and often excellent progress from their starting points. They achieve their qualifications. A high proportion go on to study at university.

Students are well-behaved, polite and respectful to each other and their teachers. They arrive to lessons on time and keen to learn. They develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours to prepare them for their future careers.

Students enjoy studying at the college. They feel safe and thrive in the warm and welcoming environment at the college. Students benefit from the calming influence of the college therapy dog. Because of his presence students are less anxious before examinations and, for some, they gain confidence by walking him around the campus.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is highly responsive to the needs of the college's students, local employers and the community. Students have access to a wide range of courses and combination of courses that meet their needs well, particularly for those currently undecided on their next steps. For example, they run higher-level GCSE mathematics to support students wishing to progress to science and mathematics A-levels and an accountancy qualification that meets local demand.

Teachers are well-supported by leaders to develop their teaching practice, which they do well. The curriculum managers use effective strategies for both individuals and whole department development activities that equip teachers with additional skills. These support the large majority of students to achieve their qualifications.

Teachers on A-level programmes make very effective use of regular formal assessments. These support students to recall what they have learned and help them to embed new knowledge. Most teachers sequence learning in a clear and logical way that allows students to make rapid progress from their starting points. However, a small minority of teachers do not check sufficiently well that prior learning is recalled. In these instances, students struggle to understand new topics.

Leaders have invested heavily in the buildings and students benefit enormously from the resources available to them. Students have access to technology to support their learning through the provision of class sets of laptops. They use these effectively to enhance their education.

Students enjoy subject-specific trips, speakers and competitions that enable them to develop a broader understanding and enthusiasm for their curriculum. For example, a public services student who wanted to be a firefighter had the opportunity to visit the local fire station. Chemistry students went for a day to the Royal Institution.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and high needs are well integrated into mainstream classes. Staff and teachers support them well to achieve at the same high level as their peers.

Learners benefit from useful careers advice and guidance to help them make decisions about their next steps. The college careers adviser visits tutorials and also offers one-to-one interviews. Second year students report how in the first year this guidance allowed them to make informed choices about their next steps.

Too few students benefit from meaningful external work placements.

Governors make a valuable contribution to the college. They are informed of and know well the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They receive frequent and detailed reports from the principal. They use these to challenge the senior leaders to

make improvements and manage poor performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Students feel safe and are safe. Leaders and managers make sure appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Staff and governors are well-trained in the application of these policies and procedures. Safeguarding leads record and monitor reported incidents effectively. They have good relationships with external agencies that they use if necessary to support students that need help. Students do not know enough about the local risks of extremism and radicalisation and how to protect themselves and others from potential harm.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that students benefit from meaningful and high-quality external work experience to support their education and prepare them for work.
- Leaders and managers should make sure that students understand the local threats of radicalisation and extremism, so that they know how to protect themselves and others from potential harm.
- Leaders should make sure that all teachers plan and teach their subjects so that students build on what they already know and can do.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130670
Address	Penland Road Bexhill-on-Sea East Sussex TN40 2JG
Contact number	01424 214545
Website	www.bexhillcollege.ac.uk
Principal	Karen Hucker
Provider type	Sixth-form college
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2015
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since Bexhill College was judged to be good in October 2015.

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Kate Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stewart Jackson

Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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