

Lewisham Southwark College

General further education college

Inspection dates

10–13 May 2016

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	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too few students and apprentices achieve their qualifications and the rate has not improved significantly for three years.
- Teachers' feedback on learners' work does not enable them to improve the quality of their work; teachers do not set learners specific and clear targets for improvement as a result of assessment outcomes.
- Not enough students move on to higher levels of qualifications or make good progress with developing skills and knowledge quickly on their courses.
- Standards of students' and apprentices' written and practical work are not consistently high.
- Too few students achieve qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Students' attendance and punctuality at lessons are not yet high enough.
- Managers do not collect and evaluate key data such as the destinations of their learners on completion of their courses, or the progress learners make from their starting points.

The provider has the following strengths

- The positive impact that new leaders and managers have had on raising the standards of teaching and the expectations teachers have of their learners.
- Provision for students in receipt of high-needs funding.
- The willingness of teaching staff to embrace change, and their commitment and enthusiasm for improvement.
- Personal support for learners who need help to overcome personal and social barriers to learning.
- The support that employers give to their apprentices in their workplaces.
- Teachers' focus on preparing students for the world of work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Lewisham Southwark College was formed in August 2012 following the merger of Lewisham College and Southwark College. A large proportion of learners are adults on part-time courses, particularly courses in English and mathematics at level 2 and below. A majority of learners aged 16 to 18 are following study programmes at level 1, with smaller numbers on vocational study programmes at levels 2 and 3. The college has approximately 458 apprentices. Transport links in Inner London are good and many learners travel to, and from, Southwark and Lewisham for their education.
- At the age of 16, the proportion of pupils in Southwark achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C is high. In Lewisham, the proportion is the lowest in Inner London. Both boroughs have a high proportion of disadvantaged learners and learners whose first language is not English. A low proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds are not in education, employment or training in both boroughs. Both Southwark and Lewisham have a large number of areas of multiple deprivation, with eight wards in each borough in the 10% most deprived in the country. A slightly higher proportion of people in Lewisham and Southwark are in employment than the London average. Workers in Southwark have a higher average income than those in Lewisham and the rest of London. Residents of both boroughs have relatively higher qualifications than those in other parts of London.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers and assessors have high aspirations for their learners, including good attendance at lessons, and enable them to fulfil their potential, especially the most able
 - teachers and assessors deploy a wide range of teaching strategies appropriately to ensure all learners make rapid progress in lessons, in working towards their qualifications and in developing their skills and knowledge
 - teachers and assessors plan learning that builds on the findings of assessment, so that learners know what they need to do to improve and are supported to do so
 - teachers and assessors provide learners with clear and specific feedback on their assessed work that enables them to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding
 - tutors and assessors set and agree with learners specific and challenging targets for improvement that they review within agreed timescales.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of English and mathematics so that:
 - following assessment of their abilities at the start of their course, students and apprentices studying for qualifications in these subjects are taught the skills and knowledge they require
 - vocational teachers successfully help learners develop the English and mathematical skills relevant for their vocational subject.
- Improve the collection and evaluation of key data, such as information on learners' destinations and the progress they make from their starting points, to use as the basis for specific and measurable actions for improvement by teachers and managers.
- Ensure that senior leaders identify accurately and intervene swiftly to improve underperforming subjects, courses or staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- After two successive inspections when the college's overall effectiveness was judged inadequate, the highly capable new senior leadership team has secured the college's capacity to improve further.
- They have improved the quality of provision, outcomes for learners and the college's financial health, but, as leaders readily understand, and as confirmed by inspectors, they still have much to do to achieve their objective of providing outstanding education and training for learners.
- Outcomes for learners and teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good and key aspects for the improvement of teaching and learning identified at the previous inspection, such as suitable challenge in lessons for all learners, continue to require attention. Learners' attendance is not yet sufficiently improved.
- Increasingly rigorous and comprehensive quality assurance and quality improvement arrangements, supported by new policies and procedures to secure rapid change, are having a positive impact on the progress current learners are making and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, but at the relatively early stage of their development they are not yet ensuring consistently good, or better, performance.
- As well as their effective focus on quality improvement, governors and senior managers have successfully tackled significant financial issues to achieve financial sustainability. Good progress has been made with the implementation of the financial recovery plan. Senior managers have skilfully managed very significant and necessary budget reductions, embracing the loss of less productive teachers and reducing the payroll by some 20%. They have also paid good attention to ensuring that the college's estate is fit for purpose, including the development of excellent new £41 million facilities for the Southwark campus.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have appointed a new, and highly experienced, principal and senior leadership team, and approved a 'root and branch' reorganisation, to ensure a simplified management structure and improved lines of communication. The new team of knowledgeable and talented heads of department are supported well by senior leaders; they are using their new responsibilities and accountability well to improve teaching and learning.
- The well-conceived new management arrangements underpin governors' and senior managers' determination to introduce a culture of higher expectations, where learners, and their learning, are at the centre of the college's work, and where their progress and achievement are paramount. Teachers have responded positively to this. They feel valued and increasingly understand, as their highest priority, their individual responsibilities and accountability in meeting the needs and interests of learners. Staff morale is now largely good, having recovered from low levels.
- Governors and managers now have a realistic view of the college's performance and of what they need to do to improve further. Their self-assessment of the college's strengths and areas for development, and associated quality improvement planning, has improved since the previous inspection and is increasingly secure.
- Managers manage teachers' performance effectively to help improve teaching and learning; they carry out very good developmental work with teachers who are underperforming. Staff training is plentiful and highly responsive to institutional and individual needs.
- The principal and senior leaders have properly focused much attention on rebuilding effective partnerships between the college and its local communities, as these were judged inadequate at the previous inspection. Good progress is being made with the two local boroughs. In Lewisham, some very good potential joint initiatives are developing, including with the Lewisham adult learning service. Links with schools in Lewisham are good. Managers are paying significant attention to fostering links with employers, including as part of the college's work to further develop apprenticeships.
- Managers have carried out excellent work to ensure the relevance of the college's curriculum to its learners and local communities this year. Good market research and the use of labour market intelligence by senior and middle managers have resulted in a curriculum closely matched to local needs. Managers work effectively with employers to offer apprenticeships that meet their needs and those of the local community. Study programmes are suitably managed. Managers have ensured an appropriate strategy and arrangements to help learners develop their English and mathematical skills which are starting to have an impact.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the promotion of equality is central to the work of this very diverse college. Learners and staff treat each other with respect and tolerance. Staff skilfully integrate themes of equality and diversity within a wide range of aspects of college life, including work to help learners

prepare for their future lives in modern Britain and to understand fundamental British values. Managers and staff understand the performance of different groups of learners and take action to address poor outcomes for any particular group.

■ **The governance of the provider**

- The largely new governing body has played a significant role in moving the college forward from its inadequate position. Governors work closely with senior managers to ensure that the college's recovery plans are on target for timely completion. They are supportive of managers, but at the same time have high expectations of what they want managers to do, in the best interests of learners.
- Governors have an appropriately detailed knowledge of the college and its work. Their good working relationships with managers and other staff allow them, for example, to visit parts of the college readily to view course activities and to talk with staff and learners.
- Governors extensively consider the role of the college within its local communities and have clearly determined their priorities for the college. Most recently, in relation to the current review of provision in London, they have identified preferred options for the future of the college, based upon robust debate and sound evidence.
- The work of the governors' quality board is particularly thorough. They receive high-quality reports and data analyses to help them in their work. Both governors and managers value the many opportunities which managers have to attend governors' meetings and to discuss their work and progress towards improvement targets.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- As at the previous inspection, statutory obligations are well met and training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and to whom they should report issues. Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities well.
- Managers have set safeguarding very securely within the college's good arrangements for the support of learners. In this context, learners are successfully encouraged to raise any issues with staff so that all concerns, including those that may be safeguarding issues, are properly dealt with.
- Managers maintain very good links with external safeguarding bodies, working in close partnership, both to seek advice and to address issues.
- The college's recruitment checks are particularly thorough. Their comprehensiveness embraces many aspects of good practice not required by statute or regulation.
- Leaders and managers have built well on their earlier work to implement the 'Prevent' duty; they ensure that the college complies with the duty, as part of its overall arrangements for safeguarding. In close partnership with expert external agencies, they work well to identify the threats of radicalisation and to tackle these. Learners have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, in the context of their work and life at college, and contribute to preparing materials to be used for wider college training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Managers have responded well to the challenge of improving the inadequate teaching, learning and assessment identified at the previous inspection. Fewer students endure low-quality teaching, learning and assessment and the teaching of English and mathematics has improved. Teachers mostly plan their lessons well, having developed a good understanding of the skills and knowledge their students need to acquire. They are supported well by managers to become better teachers through a carefully developed programme of professional development that is closely linked to thorough and reflective evaluations of their teaching. However, the variations in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that were identified at the previous inspection have not reduced quickly enough.
- Weak teaching is characterised by teachers lacking ambition for their students. On these courses, students make slow progress in lessons because teachers set work that is too easy, particularly for most-able students. Over time, students on these courses are not challenged to develop and practise their skills quickly enough. As a result, too many students are not producing work of a high enough standard. While the support from managers and coaches is improving the quality of teaching, in too many subjects long-standing weaknesses in teaching persist, and a small number of teachers have yet to master and deploy an effective range of teaching strategies.
- The standard of students' work meets awarding body requirements; however, too few students,

particularly those aged 16 to 18, produce work that exceeds minimum standards. At level 3, students who start courses with relatively low levels of prior achievement are the most likely to achieve at a minimum standard; as a result, only a small proportion of these students secure a place at, and progress to, university. In some vocational areas such as hospitality, computing, floristry, plastering and dry lining, teachers ensure students produce work of a high standard, planning their courses carefully and focusing consistently on the skills demanded by industry. In the best examples, such as professional cookery, level 3 computing and health and social care, teachers accelerate the progress of the most able students through their courses and rapidly move them on to more difficult tasks.

- Staff ensure that students and apprentices know what work they need to produce in order to complete their qualification and mostly monitor their progress well. However, their use of the outcomes of assessment to inform their planning of lessons and the quality of their feedback to students on how they can achieve higher standards require improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers in vocational subjects have continued to improve their development of students' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills, as a result of well-planned professional development. Although the majority of students now develop some competence in the specialist use of English and mathematics in their subjects, too many teachers are not developing the full range of skills students need, for example correct pronunciation by some adult students and well-written responses to practice examination questions by 16- to 18-year-old students.
- Teachers identify gaps in apprentices' and 16- to 18-year-old students' English and mathematical skills well when they start their courses, and use this to plan their teaching and support. However, the quality of teaching in discrete English and mathematics lessons varies considerably. Managers have successfully increased the number of specialist teachers in both subjects and have invested heavily in training and resources. As a result, much of the teaching is helping students to improve. However, too many lessons in these subjects are still not planned well enough to develop students' skills, and too many apprentices do not start these subjects early enough in their apprenticeships.
- A high proportion of students starting a course need considerable support in overcoming difficulties which affect their access to education, often caused by personal circumstances or low levels of English skills. Staff provide effective personal support, as well as support for students requiring additional help with their studies. Students who need to improve their English make progress, but too often do not achieve the competence in written or spoken English that would enable them to achieve their main qualifications at a higher level.
- The college community is made up of people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Staff are very aware of the challenges brought by this diversity and are persistent in promoting fundamental British values of tolerance and respect by setting high standards for behaviour around the college. As a result, students feel safe in the college; a very high proportion behave well although a small number of lessons are interrupted by low-level disruption caused by students using mobile phones or chatting.
- Teachers use web-based technologies well to provide students with a wide range of relevant and interesting learning opportunities; a very high proportion of students use these. In many subjects, such as English, health and social care, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and apprenticeships in technical theatre, students make good use of technology to study outside of lessons. Many teachers set effective assessment tasks, and provide instruction and feedback, through web-based technology. Staff use external funding and partnerships well to develop some innovative web-based learning resources and assessment tools that enrich the courses.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

- Students' attendance and punctuality to lessons, although improving, are too low, especially for lessons leading to English and mathematics qualifications. Their attendance varies considerably in different subjects, with students studying performing arts and those on supported learning courses attending at a higher rate. Staff are using different methods well to encourage students to improve their attendance, where it is not yet good enough. Those students who arrive punctually value the higher expectations their teachers have about attendance, as latecomers and absentees cause disruption to their learning.
- In vocational lessons and in the workplace, younger students and apprentices make better progress with their mathematical skills than with their English skills. Teachers and employers ensure that students and apprentices become confident with the specialist application of mathematics, for example calculating preparation and cooking times for menus, or producing scale drawings for theatre floor plans and lighting

plots accurately. Highways maintenance apprentices are able to adjust levels and angles of kerbstones quickly and competently with minimal training, to ensure they meet legal requirements.

- As a result of the training they have had at the college, through induction and tutorial activities, students are aware of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and they know how to keep themselves safe from these dangers and from the dangers posed by the internet. Students are safe at college and they know what to do should they experience bullying or harassment. Staff deal with the very limited number of incidents of bullying and harassment effectively. Students' behaviour at college is good. They treat their environment, staff and other students with respect. However, in a few lessons, students take advantage of opportunities for off-task behaviour and low-level disruption.
- Students and apprentices benefit from high-quality careers guidance from their teachers and assessors. These staff use their extensive industry and commercial experience very well to help students and apprentices make informed decisions about their next steps in education, training or employment. They act as very good role models for their students. As a consequence, a high proportion of students and apprentices, for whom progression information is available, move on to employment or further training.
- Students who attend a high proportion of their lessons enjoy them, develop good attitudes to learning and develop their practical skills and their skills for work well. They produce written work of a standard that reflects the level of their course and develop a wide range of practical skills that are relevant to their subject and chosen career. For example, floristry students provide displays for the House of Commons and construction students carry out dry lining to a high standard on construction sites. Students develop their practical skills and their skills for work further through completing external work experience placements, although not all students for whom this would be appropriate have yet completed a suitable placement or have plans to do so.
- Students and apprentices develop a good understanding of how to work safely in a wide range of practical subjects. As a consequence, they are able to use tools and equipment safely and confidently, and select and use appropriate personal protective equipment. Construction and highway maintenance apprentices complete detailed risk assessments independently for the sites on which they work, enabling them to be aware of any potential dangers while working.
- Students benefit from a wide range of additional activities, which include sport, cultural, health and well-being and community activities. These activities help them to develop a greater awareness of the communities in which they live and work, and the standards employers expect in the workplace. Many of these activities reinforce and enhance the skills and knowledge they have developed on their courses. For example, aviation hospitality students visit Heathrow airport to use aircraft cabin training facilities to practise evacuation procedures, and catering and travel and tourism students produce award-winning food and hospitality at college events.
- In the best lessons, teachers successfully develop students' understanding of diversity and the world in which they live and work. For example, in a level 2 business lesson, students from a diverse range of backgrounds shared their experiences of interacting professionally within different cultures and countries. They applied this highly successfully to the use of 'text speak' and 'street speak' compared with professional language in the workplace.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Students and apprentices are making better progress towards achieving their qualifications than in previous years, but not enough teachers yet have the high aspirations and ambitions needed for their students to achieve high grades, exceed their target grades or make exceptional progress.
- Managers expect far more students to achieve their vocational qualifications this year, due to the new systems and monitoring strategies they have introduced. It is too early to judge fully whether these initiatives will have the intended impact, but they have been positively embraced by teachers. Students of all levels are now making at least the expected progress in most learning sessions and they are able to demonstrate progress over time in terms of their skills and knowledge.
- In previous years, too few students at all levels achieved their qualifications, especially those aged 16 to 18. A higher proportion of adult students achieved their qualifications, when compared to younger students, but this proportion remains too low and it has not increased significantly in the past three years. At levels 2 and 3, a very small minority of students achieve merit or distinction grades in vocational qualifications. Managers do not systematically measure or evaluate the progress students make from their starting points.

- A high proportion of students in receipt of high-needs funding achieve their vocational qualifications. They also make very good progress towards independence through the achievement of specific personal learning and behaviour goals. However, the proportion who achieve qualifications in English and mathematics is not yet high enough.
- Although improving, too few apprentices achieve their qualifications within the planned timescale. A higher proportion go on to achieve their qualification outside the planned timescale, but a significant minority are either not successful or take far too long to complete all of the elements of their qualification. Catering, construction and plumbing apprentices are more successful than their peers in subjects such as hospitality, care and sport.
- While improving, the proportion of students who achieve qualifications in English and mathematics is not yet high enough, especially for functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Students on qualifications below level 1 are more successful in achieving these qualifications.
- Not enough students at levels 1 and 2 move on to courses at the next level on completion of their courses. A small proportion of students on level 3 courses secure places at university; students studying courses in performing arts and business are more successful than their peers in other subjects in achieving places at university. A high proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification move on to relevant employment or to the next level apprenticeship. However, too few of the apprentices who have not achieved all of the elements of their qualification secure employment, promotion or start a new course.
- Managers do not yet have a sufficiently complete set of data on the destinations of students and apprentices to enable them to make judgements about the progression of their learners after leaving college, and thus to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting local and regional skills needs.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The college provides study programmes in a wide range of subjects. The largest areas are ESOL, construction, information and communication technology (ICT) and performing arts. Currently about 1,700 students are on 16 to 19 study programmes, which account for around a quarter of the college's provision. The proportion of students who achieve their qualifications has improved slightly over the past three years, but remains low. Very few level 2 and 3 students on vocational qualifications achieve merit and distinction grades.
- Managers plan individualised study programmes that meet all the principles of 16 to 19 provision and build on students' prior attainment, providing progression to the next level. However, a significant minority of students do not progress to the next level and return to college in successive years to repeat the same level of course.
- Teachers do not monitor students' achievement of their long-term goals consistently. As a result, students' targets are often limited to relatively short-term actions, which are insufficiently focused on students' future aspirations or the progress they need to make towards achieving their qualifications.
- Most students who have not yet achieved GCSE grades A* to C in English or mathematics are enrolled on courses at appropriate levels. Managers have recently introduced several strategies to improve mathematics and English lessons, including the use of online and classroom learning in combination, as well as progress monitoring using online diagnostic software. The majority of teachers plan and teach their lessons well and link the work to the students' interests and their vocational subjects. However, in a significant minority of mathematics and English lessons, teachers do not plan and teach well enough to provide an appropriate range of activities for students and, as a result, too few students improve their skills and achieve these qualifications.
- Students for whom work experience would not be appropriate complete classroom-based lessons to improve their skills for work and equip them for a placement in the future. A significant proportion of students do benefit from work experience placements with employers, and teachers in several subjects have developed particularly strong links with local employers and organisations. However too many students do not take part in work experience, which limits their preparation for future employment.
- Teachers provide students with high-quality personalised information, advice and guidance to help them progress to further study or employment in their subject areas. For example, in an entry-level ESOL lesson, students are encouraged and supported to discuss their career aspirations, by reference to a

visual 'progression ladder'. In a level 2 ICT lesson, the teacher inspired confidence and self-belief in students by reflecting positively on their recent examination successes and their subsequent future opportunities. Tutors do not yet replicate this inspirational approach in tutorials, which currently focus primarily on attendance and discipline.

- Teachers support students effectively to develop their English and mathematical skills in their vocational lessons. They focus on the correct use of English in lessons and the correction of spelling and grammar in assessed work. Where the opportunity arises, teachers encourage students to develop their mathematical skills. For example, level 2 travel and tourism students created a personalised customer invoice for a cruise, including a range of costs.
- All students benefit from opportunities to develop their skills for employment, for example through assignment briefs developed in liaison with employers. They also benefit from visits to local businesses, participating in competitions, volunteering and charity work, and listening to guest speakers from a range of industries. Particularly effective enrichment exists in performing arts, where students benefit from well-developed industry links with organisations such as Rambert, Laban Dance Centre, London School of Contemporary Dance and the National Theatre.

Adult learning programmes

require improvement

- About 4,900 adult students study at the college, representing about two thirds of the provision. They study at three college sites and local children's centres in the boroughs of Lewisham and Southwark. Provision is a mixture of part- and full-time courses and ranges from pre-entry to level 3. English and mathematics, ESOL, ICT and health and social care form the majority of courses. In addition, Jobcentre Plus has referred 1,800 students this year, to attend short employability programmes.
- Students participate well in learning activities and most work to the standard that is expected of them. However, in a significant minority of lessons, students do not yet have sufficient opportunity to achieve their full potential. Teachers' questioning to extend students' understanding is not consistently good across all lessons, for example to check students' understanding of the underpinning principles of mathematics and accountancy.
- Teachers' feedback on students' written work and assignments is too variable in its quality and usefulness. The majority of teachers provide clear feedback which enables students to develop skills such as writing paragraphs. However, in too many cases, students get feedback which is of limited use, for example just ticks in the text. While a minority of teachers use feedback expertly to extend students' skills and understanding, too many teachers focus just on task completion and compliance with the requirements of the awarding body.
- Teachers give good oral feedback in lessons on students' practical skills development. For example, a teacher on a fashion course guided her students expertly on setting out and adjusting clothes patterns. However, teachers' feedback on students' spoken language is poor, especially for students who do not speak English as their first language. For example, access-to-nursing students whose English is hard to understand do not get the feedback they need to improve their diction and pronunciation.
- Teachers' integration of English and mathematical skills into vocational lessons requires improvement. A minority of teachers focus well on aspects of English, such as spelling and grammar. They develop the students' understanding of the use of formal language at the higher levels well. However, this good practice is inconsistent. Teachers are less adept at integrating effective opportunities into their lessons to develop students' mathematical skills.
- Learning activities meet the interests of students well. Teachers are particularly skilled at encouraging students to work and learn together and to evaluate their own and each other's work. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students worked through tasks, checked answers and explained working methods to each other.
- Students on vocational courses such as construction, travel and tourism and floristry benefit from their teachers' subject expertise and current industry experience. Teachers use their good coaching skills well to place learning in a vocational context and create good opportunities for students to develop a wide range of work-related skills.
- Teachers' focus on developing students' skills for work is good across the adult provision. Floristry students run a 'pop-up' shop, which develops their technical skills, budgeting and customer service. Travel and tourism students learn practical ticketing skills which are essential in the aviation industry. The courses offered reflect local labour market demands well for workers in construction, health and social care, and travel and tourism.

- Those who are ready for work experience have access to relevant opportunities in the workplace. Students have appropriate tasters to find out if their chosen area of work is right for them. For example, a foreign-born receptionist has a three-week placement at the college to see how she can transfer her skills. Students on pre-access courses do voluntary work, for example as first-aiders, to prepare them for paramedic training.
- Teachers' use of learning support workers is effective. Teachers and learning assistants work together to provide well-targeted support to students who are deaf or have dyslexia. As a result, these students have good opportunities to learn and achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers work effectively to improve students' understanding of diversity. They use relevant examples well in social work, health and business courses to explore British values and their impact in the workplace.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- The college offers a range of apprenticeships in business administration, customer service, ICT, project management, creative and cultural industries, hospitality and catering, and construction trades in south-east and north-west London. Some 120 higher apprentices, 155 advanced apprentices and 183 intermediate apprentices are currently in training and these form a small proportion of the college provision overall.
- Leaders' and managers' actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on apprenticeships are increasing the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications. Current apprentices are now making the progress expected of them relative to their starting points. However, although the proportion of apprentices completing their qualifications on time is rising, it remains low. Too few apprentices progress to higher-level apprenticeships.
- Assessors' setting of learning targets for apprentices is not consistently effective, because they are not specific about what apprentices need to do to improve. Targets lack completion dates so apprentices are not able to plan their learning and gather evidence in a timely manner. As a consequence, apprentices are not well prepared for assessments and this slows the progress they make.
- Assessors' marking of apprentices' work does not consistently indicate to apprentices the next steps they need to take in order to improve the quality of their work, and assessors are not demanding enough of the most-able apprentices to encourage them to produce a higher standard of written work. Assessors do not routinely correct apprentices' poor spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, in order to promote professional standards; consequently, apprentices' confidence in being able to write fluently does not improve sufficiently, and nor does the standard of their written work.
- Assessors do not plan routinely for functional skills qualifications to be taught early enough in apprentices' training. These essential skills, necessary to progress in learning, are developed too late in their training, and this slows the progress apprentices are able to make.
- Apprentices develop well a wide range of workplace skills that are valued by employers. For example, customer service apprentices are able to provide reliable services, such as telephone and email support to customers, that deal quickly with queries or any concerns they may have. Hospitality supervision apprentices are skilled at planning team meetings, managing staff rotas and holding training sessions with food and beverage teams. Most apprentices who complete their training remain in employment.
- Assessors are enthusiastic, experienced practitioners with current occupational knowledge, and act as positive role models for students. They coach apprentices well and develop their competence and skills for work effectively. For example, a community arts apprentice was able to plan an exciting and interesting children's event at the local theatre, making sure that parents and children with restricted mobility and sensory impairment were able to participate fully in the event.
- Assessors provide accurate oral feedback and guidance to apprentices on how they can improve their performance. Their skilful questioning helps assessors to have a clear idea of the level of apprentices' understanding; they then use more searching questions to make apprentices think and develop their problem-solving skills further.
- Apprentices apply their mathematical skills well at work because they have developed these skills well as a result of good on-the-job training. For example, customer service apprentices are able to calculate customers' water usage bills accurately from average daily consumption levels. The majority of apprentices are able to write clear accounts of the work they do, correctly using the technical terms of their industries.

- Before they start training, assessors work closely with employers and apprentices to ensure that the apprenticeship qualification is closely matched to the needs of the employer and the starting point of their apprentice. Apprentices benefit from frequent assessor visits and regular contact between visits. They use the electronic portfolio to send work to assessors and to get prompt feedback on their work. Assessors work well with employers to provide effective support to apprentices who need extra help, such as extra time at work to prepare for examinations.

Provision for learners with high needs

is good

- The college has 219 students aged 16 to 24 in receipt of high-needs funding with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or medical conditions, based on the Lewisham and Deptford campuses. Twenty-nine of these students are supported on mainstream programmes across the college.
- Managers and staff have high expectations for students and place a very strong emphasis on students becoming as independent as they are able, so they can make informed choices about their futures. They provide a rich variety of learning experiences which widen students' horizons and raise their aspirations well. Students become increasingly confident and adept at making choices within their well-designed learning programmes and wider aspects of their lives.
- Students and their parents and carers receive very good information, advice and guidance. Students' needs are thoroughly and comprehensively assessed in close partnership with schools, local authorities, social services and other specialist agencies. As a result, students have carefully tailored, challenging programmes.
- Teachers are highly skilled and bring their specialist expertise in a wide range of subjects, such as performing arts, business, catering and retail, to bear in planning exciting, relevant and interesting lessons which students greatly enjoy. They use learning support workers very effectively so that individuals are strongly challenged to participate as fully as they are able. One group of students rehearsed their performance of 'Animal Farm' with individual targets around improving the expression of emotions, listening for cues from others or clearer diction. Students make good progress in developing their communication skills, concentration and confidence.
- Learning support workers are very well trained. They provide very effective support, carefully noting the small steps students make in developing their skills and confidence. They provide students with very constructive feedback and encouragement. Teachers and support staff work collaboratively on mainstream programmes, ensuring students are well integrated into course groups. Other students benefit from individual attention which motivates them to work hard and make good progress in developing their personal skill priorities.
- Students have very clear, simple targets for improvement which are relevant to them as individuals and which they understand. Staff carefully monitor, review and record their progress and skills development well on a regular basis. Staff use simplified sign language and other visual prompts well so students are fully involved and understand what they must do to improve.
- Students benefit from effective, individual tutorials, where they have sensitive support and guidance in coping with personal issues and in addressing worries and frustrations with difficulties in communication. Tutors manage their difficulties well in partnership with specialist agencies, including speech and language therapists, psychologists and social workers who support students' greatest needs. Students feel safe, look forward to college and develop a wider social network.
- Students develop a good understanding of their local area and build their skills and confidence by interacting in the wider community. They benefit from regular trips to places of interest which students choose. The majority of students are independent travellers and a further 12 students met their personal targets and gained enough skills and confidence to travel independently this academic year. One group chose to visit the Imperial War Museum; they planned and costed their travel route and refreshments. They practised and applied their evaluative skills in discussing their experiences on their return.
- Teachers weave essential number, money management and basic English skills effectively into all the learning programmes. Students use information learning technologies routinely and develop good study skills as they work as part of a team and take responsibility for collecting resources and organising and presenting their own work. In an art class, students reviewed the collage work of an American artist online and then sourced their own material to create their own high standards of work. They then photographed, printed, framed, labelled and priced their work for sale within the college. Staff were skilled at ensuring students made their own choices and decisions with well-timed prompts and

encouragement. Students used English, mathematical and technological skills as integral parts of the process. They improved their work-readiness skills and concentration well as they completed the project.

- Not all teachers use assessment information about students' specific skills gaps well enough to ensure that all students with the ability to do so gain qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Opportunities for work experience and planned progression to employment, for the minority of students for whom this is a realistic goal, are not well developed. Placements are limited and students do not receive good enough coaching or on-the-job training. Managers have recognised the need for improvements and are currently developing a work project with Lewisham council. Learning support workers are being trained as job coaches. However, these measures will not have a sufficiently positive impact on current students.

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	6,647
Principal/CEO	Carole Kitching
Website address	www.lesoco.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	539	2,615	679	1,550	482	524	0	258
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	51	132	13	142	0	120		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	None							
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"> ■ Pentland Assessment Centres Limited ■ Quest Training (South East) Limited 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Richard Pemble, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Tucker	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Martin	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Garai	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Nelson	Ofsted Inspector
Tricia Pugsley	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Russell	Ofsted Inspector
Philida Schellekens	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Smith	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the vice-principal for curriculum, teaching and learning, 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 students 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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