

Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College is a medium sized sixth form college occupying a single site in Hove approximately one kilometre from Brighton city centre. The city has an estimated population of approximately 250,000. Those of working age are well educated but, at 55.2%, the proportion of young people achieving 5 A* to C grades in 2006 was below the national average of 59.2%. The city is a major tourist, leisure and conference destination and economic growth is improving steadily. However, at 2.9%, unemployment is above the regional average and earnings are below the national average. Approximately one third of children are estimated to be living in poor households.

2. Although the college is heavily over-subscribed, the admissions policy gives priority to young people living within the city. Over 60% of students are enrolled from the five Brighton 11-16 schools, the four Hove 11-18 schools and the city's three independent schools. Excellent transport links make the college a popular choice for young people living outside the city.
3. The college has a formal accord with the two other local further education (FE) colleges and offers provision in 10 sector subject areas. Most of the provision is at level 3. In 2006/07, the college had 1,628 students on roll which equates to 9,829 enrolments. Of these students, 1,602 were aged 16 to 18. Student numbers increased to 1,770 at the start of this academic year. At 14.3%, the proportion of students from black and minority ethnic communities attending the college is well above the city average of 5.8%. The college mission is to 'transform lives through learning'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: Contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. This is a good college. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 following long qualifications improved significantly at levels 1 and 2 between 2004/05 and 2006/07 and are well above the national averages for sixth form colleges. The large majority of students follow level 3 courses and success rates are high. GCE AS and A level students make outstanding progress in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.
5. Teaching and learning are good. Students are committed to learning and most lessons promote their interest in their work well. Students receive good encouragement to develop as independent learners. However, effective use is not made of information learning technology (ILT) in all lessons and teachers do not always adopt a sufficiently broad array of questioning techniques to stimulate learning. Resources are satisfactory. Whilst most teaching resources are good and students have good access to computers, accommodation is cramped and no longer fit for purpose.
6. The curriculum is well designed and enables the college to meet the individual needs of students with different levels of prior attainment effectively. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Students' personal development is enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities. Formal links with employers are good where they exist but they are limited in number.
7. Support and guidance for students are good. Initial advice and guidance are good and support for individual students is particularly strong. Students' progress is monitored carefully and students contribute well to evaluating their own performance. Tutors maintain a clear overview of progress but do not always record proposed actions and outcomes in sufficient detail. Group tutorials help students progress to higher education or employment well but do not make best use of students' time. Students with additional learning needs are very well supported and make good progress.
8. Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior managers have been very successful in establishing a culture of openness, accountability and trust which has had a significant impact on students' achievement. Managers and teachers take concerted action to bring about improvement. Governance is outstanding and governors are rigorous in their review of performance. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and highly effective. Self-assessment is rigorous and used well to promote continuous improvement. The promotion of equality of opportunity and educational and social inclusion is good.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

9. The college has outstanding capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, senior managers have successfully established a culture of openness,

accountability and trust. More level 1 and 2 provision is now offered and success rates have continued to rise at all levels. The college has been particularly successful in improving the progress A level students make in relation to their prior attainment. Staff morale is very high and managers and teachers share a commitment to driving up standards further. Quality assurance procedures are robust and self-assessment is used particularly well to improve performance. Rebuilding the college is an integral part of the college's strategy for further improvement and funding has been secured to that end.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

10. The college has successfully remedied weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection and consolidated its strengths. With a clear focus on students' achievement, success rates have continued to rise, teaching and support for students have improved and the college has continued to develop a more inclusive curriculum. Funding has been secured to improve accommodation and a major rebuild will commence in 2008.

Key strengths

- outstanding student achievement
- outstanding leadership and management fully engaging all staff in the college mission
- strong culture of quality improvement focusing on students' achievement
- carefully designed and inclusive curriculum
- strong support for individual students
- rigorous monitoring of students' performance
- outstanding governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- structure and content of group tutorials
- enrichment of the curriculum through wider employer links
- co-ordination of actions to promote equality and diversity across the curriculum.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are outstanding. In 2006/07, overall success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on long qualifications were above the 2005/06 national averages for sixth form colleges at all levels. Only for a small minority of courses were success rates below the national average. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07, success rates improved by 19 and 15 percentage points respectively for qualifications at levels 1 and 2. During the same period, success rates improved in all of the 10 sector subject areas offered by the college and are above the 2005/06 national averages for sixth form colleges. Attendance is improving and is good at 91%.
12. The large majority of students follow level 3 courses. Success rates have improved steadily for the past four years and at 88% are above the 2005/06 national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of students following GCE A level courses who gain A or B grades was high at 47% and 56% respectively for AS and A2 courses in 2005/06. The progress GCE A level students make in relation to their prior attainment is outstanding. Few students fail to achieve their predicted outcomes.
13. Numbers of students following short courses are relatively low. Success rates are good but declined from 85% to 83% in 2006/07. In line with college policy, adult enrolments are largely confined to asylum seekers and refugees and success rates for these students are high. Work-based learning success rates have improved significantly and at 67% are now good.
14. Success rates for students from minority ethnic backgrounds are improving and in 2006/07 were in line with college averages. For those groups where rates are lower, students succeed well on their main programmes of study.
15. The college enrolls all students on key skill programmes as part of their overall entitlement. Only those students who have not achieved GCSE qualifications or whose learning programmes include key skills are required to sit tests and complete portfolios. These students achieve well but, whilst all students benefit from the programmes, the high numbers who chose not to opt for formal accreditation depressed the overall college success rate from 88% to 73% in 2006/07.
16. Students' conduct and behaviour are excellent and the standard of their work is high. They are enthusiastic about the college and how it helps them develop their personal skills and prepare them for employment or higher education. Participation in activities outside their main programmes of study adds to

students' enjoyment. They contribute well both to the life of the college and the local community. Students following vocational courses and work-based learning programmes develop skills and knowledge that are relevant to their future employment.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

17. Quality of provision is good. The college accurately judges that teaching and learning are good. Students are attentive, purposeful and enjoy their lessons. A small minority of learners lack motivation. Teachers plan and prepare their work thoughtfully and know their students well. Previous work is reviewed carefully in lessons and teachers state the aims and expectations clearly. Most lessons include a range of stimulating activities which successfully engage students. Small group and individual activities are used to good effect to maintain learners' interest and stimulate discussion. Teachers regularly check students' understanding in lessons but often adopt too narrow a range of questioning techniques to promote learning. Despite college policies for developing the use of ILT, its use is still not sufficiently evident in lessons.
18. Students value highly the extensive individual support that teachers provide outside formal lesson periods to help them improve. This contributes significantly to their achievements. Specialist additional learning support is provided sensitively and effectively when required. Students are encouraged well to develop their wider independent learning skills and subject knowledge through use of the college open learning centre and electronic sources of information. Assessment is accurate and is used well to promote learning. Students' work is marked carefully and comments are used constructively to help them improve.
19. Learning resources are satisfactory. Subject resource packs are used to good effect to support learning. Students have good access to computers and can access learning materials from home. The central library is well stocked and used. Although teachers make the most of the accommodation available, much of it is cramped and unsatisfactory and inhibits learning. Staff development through subject learning coaches, the college Bite Size training and other initiatives, help teachers to develop new ways of supporting learning well.
20. The college correctly identifies in its self-assessment report that the needs and interests of students are responded to well through a good range of courses. The offer is developed in partnership with the other two FE colleges serving the area to ensure a coherent response to the city's needs. The curriculum is carefully constructed to meet the needs of individual students with differing levels of attainment. Over 40 subjects are offered at GCE AS and A level which can be combined with vocational courses and the arrangements promote equality of opportunity well. Apprenticeship programmes further enhance opportunities in four curriculum areas. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and information technology courses are provided for asylum seekers and refugees.

21. A wide ranging enrichment programme enhances students' personal development. Take up is good. Some two thirds of students participate in this extensive offer during the year and all are involved in the end of year enrichment week which includes interesting study trips. Students are encouraged well to make a positive contribution to the life of the college and the local community. The student union is active in presenting students' views to governors and managers. A student council has recently been reformed but students are not yet sufficiently aware of its work. Work experience opportunities are available for all who wish to take them up and are a requisite part of vocational programmes. The college has good links with the local NHS Trust but there are few formal links with other employers.
22. Guidance and support for students are good, as recognised by the college in its self-assessment report. Initial advice and guidance are well organised. A well designed prospectus, attractive publicity materials and visits to schools by college staff ensure applicants are well informed about the college. Admission procedures, screening for additional needs and induction arrangements are well structured, meet individuals' needs and are appreciated by students.
23. Support for individual students is particularly strong and students contribute well to evaluating their own progress and identifying areas for improvement. Well structured, twice yearly subject reviews identify clear targets for improvement and purposeful action plans. Subsequent tutorial reviews reinforce the process and provide an effective overview of performance. However, few tutors record the actions and outcomes well. Additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good and students receiving additional support make more progress than the college average for the same programmes. The support students receive makes an excellent contribution to helping them achieve economic well-being.
24. The tutorial scheme is strongly focused on supporting students' progression to the next level of study, higher education or employment and is carefully structured to meet the differing needs of individuals. Despite the effectiveness of one to one support, group tutorials do not make effective use of students' time and fail to capture their interest. Specialist welfare, guidance, counselling and advice on health related matters are good. The college makes a good contribution to helping students stay healthy.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning

Good: Grade 2

25. Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors and senior managers provide outstanding leadership and have established a culture of openness, accountability and trust. Communications are excellent. Staff morale is particularly high and staff are enabled to take responsibility for their own performance and that of the college. Management initiatives focus strongly on

students' achievements and on creating an environment that facilitates the raising of standards. The college works well with other organisations and, through a formal accord with partner colleges, is rationalising the curriculum locally. Good progress has been made in improving work-based learning outcomes.

26. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and highly effective in promoting improvement. Staff at all levels have good access to the data they need to improve performance. Procedures for monitoring students' progress are highly effective. Intervention is quick and particularly supportive. Weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been addressed well and funding has been secured for rebuilding outdated accommodation.
27. Internal lesson observation procedures provide an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning and are highly valued by teachers. Managers identify specific themes for investigation annually. Outcomes of observations are used well to inform staff training and share good practice. Staff development opportunities are wide ranging and offer significant opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and classroom practice. Teachers identify, celebrate and share good practice effectively through a wide range of mechanisms.
28. Self-assessment is a rigorous and continuous process. Performance is constantly reviewed by managers and teachers who take concerted actions to bring about improvements. Although curriculum self-assessments are overly descriptive, thorough moderation discussions are used well to identify and implement improvements. However, actions are not always recorded consistently across the college.
29. The college's promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The flexibility of the curriculum enables the needs of students with different levels of attainment to be met well and support for individual students is strong. Overall, the college's response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is satisfactory. The performance of students from different minority ethnic groups is monitored carefully and they receive good individual support. The college has, however, identified the need to strengthen the co-ordination of action to promote students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity across the curriculum. Despite having accommodation which is largely scheduled for demolition, very good efforts have been made to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA).
30. Governance is excellent. Governors challenge senior managers well and are thorough and rigorous in their review of college performance. Financial management is strong and resources are deployed well to support educational priorities. The college provides good value for money. The college makes a good contribution to helping students stay safe. Child protection procedures are clear and staff and governors have been trained in their implementation.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	199	71	64	7	41	17	56	-39
	05/06	238	72	71	1	53	26	56	-30
	06/07	171	91			28	61		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	05/06	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	06/07	-	-	-		-	-	-	
NVQs	04/05	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	05/06	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	06/07	-	-	-		-	-	-	
Other	04/05	199	71	64	7	41	17	56	-39
	05/06	238	72	71	1	53	26	56	-30
	06/07	172	91			28	61		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	502	73	73	0	22	77	56	21
	05/06	695	70	78	-8	1	100	64	36
	06/07	632	85	-	-	-	-	-	
GCSEs	04/05	247	85	78	7	1	100	65	35
	05/06	219	86	82	4	1	100	66	34
	06/07	247	84			-	-		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	37	57	74	-17	-	-	-	
	05/06	39	72	77	-5	-	-	-	
	06/07	35	77			-	-	-	
NVQs	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	06/07	-	-	-		-	-	-	
Other	04/05	218	62	62	0	21	76	52	24
	05/06	437	62	70	-8	-			
	06/07	350	86			-			

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	04/05	4779	85	82	3	74	74	59	15
	05/06	5489	86	83	3	31	94	65	29
	06/07	5259	88			23	91		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	1526	93	92	1	46	87	76	11
	05/06	1917	95	93	2	16	100	78	22
	06/07	2008	94			18	94		
AS Levels	04/05	3101	82	78	4	29	55	54	1
	05/06	3459	82	79	3	15	87	58	29
	06/07	3101	84			5	80		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	101	71	74	3	-	-	-	
	05/06	52	77	74	3	-	-	-	
	06/07	21	86			-	-	-	
NVQs	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	06/07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other	04/05	51	75	72	3	-	-	-	
	05/06	61	77	75	2	-	-	-	
	06/07	129	88			-	-		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners *	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate **	College framework rate **	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall					
		timely					
	05/06	overall					
		timely					
	06/07	overall					
		timely					
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	69	0	51	0	39
		timely	92	7	22	7	29
	05/06	overall	56	41	58	41	52
		timely	37	0	34	0	38
	06/07	overall					
		timely					

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'