

# Hartlepool Sixth Form College

Sixth form college



**Inspection dates** 13–15 January 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Good       |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good       |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good       |
| Outcomes for learners                        | Good       |
| 16 to 19 study programmes                    | Good       |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- A tangible ethos of high expectations has rapidly improved the quality of learners' experience and the results they achieve.
- Dynamic and challenging senior leadership and governance of the college have led to considerable improvements since the last inspection.
- Throughout their study programme learners improve their self-confidence and raise their expectations; as a result, they are well prepared for higher education or employment.
- Staff pay excellent attention to safeguarding all learners and the rapid implementation of the 'Prevent' strategy has already demonstrated a positive impact on learners' understanding.
- The large majority of learners make at least their expected progress in relation to their starting points and the number who progress to further study, higher education or employment is high.
- Teachers and staff have high expectations of learners; teaching, learning and assessment are good overall.
- A strong culture of inclusion and valuing the individual leads to learners respecting each other and staff. They feel very safe and their behaviour in college is exemplary.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because

- Retention rates and the progress that learners make on a small minority of programmes require further improvement.
- In a minority of courses, assessment and feedback lack challenge and as a result learners make slower progress.
- Actions taken by managers have not yet had sufficient impact on all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- In a small minority of curriculum areas improvement has not been secured as rapidly as in other areas.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Hartlepool has a population of around 93,000. Hartlepool Sixth Form College is the only specialist sixth form college in Hartlepool and is on one well-resourced site. The college offers mainly study programmes in a broad range of subjects in AS- and A-level programmes and an increasing number of vocational BTEC programmes. The college also provides intermediate level courses for a small number of learners and apprentices in sport. The majority of learners are recruited from the five local partner schools in Hartlepool. The vast majority of learners are aged 16 to 18 years and study on advanced level programmes. The college also recruits international learners, particularly from China.
- According to the latest census data, less than 3% of Hartlepool's population is from a minority ethnic background. The unemployment rate in Hartlepool is significantly higher than both regional and national rates. The proportion of the population educated to level 2 or above is significantly lower than both regional and national rates. The proportion of learners in Hartlepool schools attaining five GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics is lower than North East and England averages.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that attendance, retention and the progress that learners make continues to be rigorously monitored by managers, teachers and tutors and that appropriate support is rapidly put into place and tracked so that all learners can achieve their full potential.
- Ensure that the feedback given to learners to improve their work is detailed, clear and helps them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Ensure that all teachers mark work for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Continue to provide clear feedback and targeted staff development to teachers after the observation of their lessons to ensure that their practice is continuously improved and that good practice is shared.
- Provide support and challenge to managers and staff for courses where improvement has not yet been secured. Share the good practice that exists so that every learner has an excellent experience.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. There is a tangible ethos of high expectations for academic excellence at Hartlepool Sixth Form College. Through dynamic and challenging leadership, senior leaders and governors have rapidly improved the quality of experience for learners and their outcomes.
- Senior leaders and governors have responded exceptionally well to the issues identified in the previous inspection. They have restructured the senior leadership and middle management teams and put improved teaching, learning and assessment at the heart of college improvement. Through much improved access to data about learner performance, staff, learners and parents know about the progress that learners make towards their aspirational targets. Managers use this data well to tackle weak performance.
- Curriculum managers are now more accountable for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress of their learners; in most cases this, along with effective professional development, is improving teaching practice and learner outcomes. In a small minority of subject areas improvement is not being secured as rapidly as in other areas.
- Self-assessment is accurate and rigorous. Senior leaders, governors and managers know the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Consequently, there is a well-structured quality improvement plan that informs improvement activity throughout the college. Senior leaders, governors and managers are passionate about what they do and have developed strong support and challenge strategies to ensure that learners succeed.
- Senior leaders and managers collaborate with other providers to ensure that learners have access to the courses and resources they need to succeed. They work well with other providers and local economic and enterprise organisations to ensure that the curriculum offered meets local enterprise partnership priorities, particularly in relation to science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects.
- Senior leaders' and managers' effective analysis of success rate data has led to them challenging curriculum leaders and teachers to change schemes of work and teaching and learning strategies so that learners make better progress from their starting points. They also review how well their curriculum provides the support that learners need to fulfil their career aspirations. They provide opportunities for thorough and impartial careers and academic guidance to help learners applying to the college, and those who have completed their studies, make the right decisions for their future.
- Through a strong focus from senior leaders, managers and teachers, learners talk confidently about how equality and diversity influences their lives. For example, they understand that they need to be respectful of others and celebrate their differences.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - The restructured governing body understands very well what the college needs to do to improve and works very closely with senior leaders to secure swift improvement. Governors have finely tuned their challenge to senior leaders, not only in respect of the quality of provision, but also in relation to the role that the college plays in meeting local needs. For example, they have led discussions about the college's place in a rapidly changing sector.
  - Governors have an excellent understanding of the curriculum, and through their link governor roles offer strong support and challenge to subject leaders to secure improvement in learner outcomes.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Learners and staff understand how safeguarding impacts their lives and work because senior leaders and managers have transparent policies and strong processes. Consequently, most learners know that college staff are dedicated to keeping them safe. Student and staff understanding of safeguarding, reinforced by frequent training, leads to rapid identification of issues and their swift resolution.
  - Senior leaders and managers work very effectively with external agencies, using their expertise and advice to ensure the safety of learners. The college carries out detailed and rigorous recruitment checks on staff and keeps thorough and current records.
  - Governors and senior leaders have ensured through their extensive partnerships that staff training in the 'Prevent' duty and British values led to a very well- received whole-college training event. There are very thorough arrangements in place to identify and deal quickly with any threats of radicalisation.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the last inspection. Most teachers and assessors provide high levels of support to learners and challenge them very effectively to achieve and progress beyond the level expected of them. As a result, the majority of learners make good or better progress and achieve better than the grades predicted for them at the start of their course.
- Almost all teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about learning; they are innovative in the classroom, making good use of a broad range of teaching techniques that stimulate learners and develop their knowledge. Many teachers make particularly effective use of questioning to extend and develop learners' thinking, frequently breaking down and extending questions, providing challenge to most learners. For example, in a music lesson the teacher posed incrementally probing questions to the learners, challenging them to explore in depth the ideology and imagery behind a range of music videos. However, this is not yet consistent across the college. In a minority of lessons teachers pose questions to the whole class; consequently, they do not have a clear picture of the extent of learning and the consolidation of knowledge and understanding of all learners.
- Teachers plan and facilitate learning skilfully, using a wide range of resources, including information technology, that are appropriate to the learner and the topic. Many classrooms have excellent displays on the walls, providing learners with information about career progression and further learning as well as a range of current information about topical issues relevant to their programme. For example, in physics, learners' achievements are celebrated through a roll of honour displayed on the wall.
- Teachers encourage learners to work together to share and discuss ideas and review each other's work. Through this approach, learners develop the skills of analysis, communication and critical evaluation; they learn to challenge and explore different perspectives and ideas. This approach to learning supports learners to gain a thorough understanding of assessment for their final examinations. For example, in law, learners enthusiastically debated and challenged each other on the nuances of deliberate injury, confidently relating this to case law. In government and politics, learners knowledgeably explored the implications of appointments to the Supreme Court, confidently challenging the teacher about the long-term impact of these appointments.
- Overall, the standard of learners' work is good and well presented. In a minority of cases, however, work is below the quality expected. For example, in mathematics learners do not always use rulers to draw lines for graphs and other mathematical diagrams, and teachers do not comment on this when marking work to ensure that it is rectified.
- Academic support tutorials (ASTs) successfully provide challenge to all learners, supporting where there are gaps in learning and challenging those making the most rapid progress to aim even higher. Learners retaking English and mathematics GCSEs are making rapid progress and most learners attribute this to the individualised learning that the ASTs provide.
- Tracking of learner progress is generally good. Almost all learners know their target grades and most are making at least the progress expected of them. The new online electronic tracking system is accessible and used well to monitor most aspects of the learners' programmes. It quickly highlights when aspects such as attendance are declining. The new four-tier strategy for intervention is proving effective; for example, there is a rapid improvement in attendance of learners where a decline was previously identified. Despite this, in a minority of subject areas, for example health and social care, the attendance of a few learners is persistently low.
- Although the new tracking process captures many aspects of learners' programmes, it does not effectively record and monitor the support requirements and progress of learners with high needs. Consequently, teachers are not fully informed of the needs of all learners. The progress of these learners towards a reduced level of support is not captured, making it difficult to assess their gains in independent learning.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers provide learners with detailed and useful feedback that enables them to make good progress. However, in a minority of subjects such as early childhood studies learners are not clear what they need to do to attain a higher grade because feedback is not sufficiently detailed and occasionally contains grammatical errors.
- The college has an inclusive culture; learners benefit from a participative and harmonious environment. Use of derogatory and derisive language is not tolerated; inspectors saw good examples of this in lessons and during breaks from study. The 'Prevent' duty has been very effectively delivered across the whole college through a dedicated morning of activities in which teachers and learners participated enthusiastically and consequently raised their awareness of these important issues.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Throughout their learning pupils grow in self-confidence and become increasingly aspirational in their work and personal lives. As a result, they become well prepared for higher education or further study. For example, media students develop good skills and confidence in media presentation through hosting programmes on local radio stations.
- Attendance is high for advanced level courses. Attendance and punctuality have improved because of the strategies that managers have introduced. One particularly effective strategy in improving attendance is the introduction of student achievement tutors who monitor individual performance and put support mechanisms in place when needed.
- Staff place a strong emphasis on setting individual aspirational targets and have effective processes to track and monitor progress against them. As a result, nearly nine out of 10 learners have achieved their target grades in the last year. The progress for the majority of current learners is good, however a small minority of learners are not on target; managers are aware of this and support has been put into place.
- The curriculum offer is broad and offers advanced vocational and academic courses. Consistent and focused information, advice and guidance start prior to the learner starting at the college and continue throughout their time at college. Careers advice is now impartial and covers a wide range of activities from individual advice, to large careers events. As a result, learners are now much better able to make informed choices about progression to university, apprenticeships or employment.
- Teachers ensure that study programmes are challenging, reflect individual starting points and meet the medium-term career aspirations of learners. Learners have access to a relevant range of enrichment activities and additional qualifications such as street theatre activities and the employability certificate, which extends their wider skills and knowledge well. However, managers and staff are not consistently tracking, monitoring and reviewing the progress and engagement of learners in this important aspect of learning.
- In most vocational areas learners participate in relevant work experience or work-related activities; however, in a small minority of areas, for example in information technology, learners do not undertake work experience.
- Learners are aware of the importance of developing their English and mathematical skills to enable them to realise their career aims. A higher proportion of learners than in other sixth form colleges achieve a GCSE at C grade or above in these subjects.
- The college embraces an inclusive ethos and provides good opportunities for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed. The attainment levels of learners entering courses is lower than for similar sixth form colleges; nevertheless, they make good progress in their studies and achieve well.
- Progression within the college to a higher level of study is good and the vast majority of learners progress into higher education, further study or employment when they leave the college.
- A very strong culture of valuing the individual permeates the college; learners respect each other and their teachers. They feel very safe and their consistently very good behaviour in college reflects their awareness of fundamental core British values. They feel confident to raise any concerns and know that any issues they may raise will be swiftly addressed.

## Outcomes for learners are good

- The college provides study programmes across a range of subject areas for learners aged 16 to 19 and 19+. The vast majority of learners are aged 16 to 18 and on full-time advanced level programmes, with the remaining learners studying on intermediate level courses. Around half of advanced level learners are studying AS- and A-level courses, around a third are studying vocational courses with the remainder on a blend of vocational and A-level subjects.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of learners achieving their qualification has significantly increased, and is now high. The success rates have rapidly improved, to such an extent over the last year that they are now above the national rate for sixth form colleges. This improvement is evident for the large majority of key programmes of study for learners.
- Success rates are high in the large majority of subject areas, although a few subjects have not improved at the same rate as others. For example, success rates require improvement on the BTEC level 3 in child development and well-being and in geography and law at AS level.
- Retention rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on the very large majority of programmes have significantly improved and are now high. Fewer learners leave the college after one year and a higher proportion are now continuing in further study at the college than previously. Retention for learners over 19 years of age is high and has improved compared to last year, with the exception of AS courses, which remains lower

than that of similar providers.

- Leaders and managers have taken decisive action to improve underperforming courses. Managers have established and use rigorous monitoring systems very effectively; as a result, learners' progress is now at least as expected and in many courses good. In most courses, the majority of current learners are on track to achieve their target grade.
- Many more learners make good or better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. The large majority of learners make at least the progress expected of them in relation to their starting points. Level 3 vocational learners often make excellent progress on their courses and AS- and A-level learners overall make good progress. At AS level a minority of learners do not achieve their target grade.
- The development of learners' English and mathematical skills in lessons is good in most subject areas. In the most recent examinations, all learners entered for GCSE English achieved grade C or above; this is significantly higher than similar providers and is outstanding. Around half of learners achieve grade C or above in their GCSE mathematics, which is better than for similar colleges. The proportion of learners who achieve functional skills in mathematics at level 2, although above the low national rate, requires improvement.
- Learners' work is good and they develop skills that they can apply to their current study and future employment. More than three quarters of learners come to the college with low levels of prior attainment and aspirations and they are supported well to develop their confidence and employability skills, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The very large majority of learners apply to higher education and successfully obtain a place at their first-choice university. The courses that they go on to study match well to their initial goals and ambitions. A small proportion of learners progress straight into employment or to apprenticeships. College managers have been very successful in monitoring the destination of every learner who left the college in the previous academic year.

## Provider details

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Type of provider</b>  | Sixth form college   |
| <b>Age range of learners</b>   | 16-18/19+  |
| <b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b> | 928  |
| <b>Principal/CEO</b>   | Mr Alex Fau-Goodwin  |
| <b>Website address</b>   | <a href="http://www.hpoolsfc.ac.uk">www.hpoolsfc.ac.uk</a> |

## 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+ |
| <b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>                                     | 0   | 0   | 19       | 1   | 817     | 18  | 0                 | 0   |
| <b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>                                    | Intermediate  |     | Advanced |     | Higher  |     |                   |     |
|   | 16-18   | 19+ | 16-18    | 19+ | 16-18   | 19+ |                   |     |
| <b>Number of traineeships</b>   | 5   | 0   | 2        | 1   | 0       | 0   |                   |     |
|   | 16-19   |     | 19+      |     | Total   |     |                   |     |
|   | 0   |     | 0        |     | 0       |     |                   |     |
| <b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>  | Not applicable  |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
| <b>Funding received from</b>  | Education Funding Agency (EFA)/ Skills Funding Agency (SFA) |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
| <b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b> | Not applicable  |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

|                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Andrea Machell, Lead Inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Chris Jones                    | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Elaine Clinton                 | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Joyce Guthrie                  | Ofsted Inspector        |

The above team was assisted by the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality 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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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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