

St Vincent College

Sixth form college

13–15 January 2016

Inspection dates**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
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Since the previous inspection governors and leaders have taken decisive and effective action to remedy years of underachievement by students.
- Leaders have a very clear and accurate understanding of the quality of college provision.
- The culture of the college is strongly focused on successfully developing students to achieve their best.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, and outstanding in sport and public services.
- Students benefit from particularly well-coordinated and highly effective support.
- The proportion of students making good or better progress and completing their main qualification successfully has improved over the past three years and is now high.
- Students thrive at college; they feel safe and respected and are expected to achieve highly.
- Careers advice and guidance are effective in enabling students to make the right choices.
- Managers' thorough analysis of students' destinations demonstrates that most successfully progress into higher education or employment.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because

- Students do not make sufficient progress in developing their mathematical skills.
- Not enough students on 16 to 19 study programmes have sufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of the world of work in line with their future career choices.
- Managers and teachers of high-needs students on non-accredited courses do not always support them to recognise their own progress.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St Vincent College is a small sixth form college in Gosport, Hampshire. The college provides a wide range of academic and vocational courses from pre-entry level to level 5. Most students are enrolled onto full-time study programmes. Of those, around half study at level 3 with an equal number of students at levels 1 and 2. Over 150 students are in receipt of high-needs funding.
- The proportion of school pupils in Gosport achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well below the regional and national rates. Unemployment is higher than the national average, and the proportion of the population qualified to level 4 is much lower than the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics, so that:
 - all students throughout their course fully understand the importance of developing their mathematical skills and gain the highest level of qualification possible to increase their future career prospects
 - all mathematics and vocational teachers provide work that is interesting, relevant and demanding for students of all abilities, both in and out of lessons
 - students receive frequent and helpful feedback on their work and progress.
- Ensure that all students on 16 to 19 study programmes are able to develop high levels of understanding of the world of work through a broad range of appropriate activities, including high-quality work experience.
- Set challenging learning targets related to programme outcomes and development of personal skills for high-needs students on non-accredited courses; ensure that students, parents and teachers are able to recognise progress and celebrate achievements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The Principal, senior leaders and governors have established a clear set of values for the college. They promote these through a vision and mission that centre firmly on improving the ways the college serves its students and community. Managers, staff and students understand the vision and values of the college and enthusiastically engage with them.
- Leaders' and managers' expectations are high; they communicate their expectations to staff, students and parents very effectively. Staff value the good range and quality of information they receive about the college's position and direction, and they routinely contribute to consultations and activities that shape and influence policy making. Morale is high and staff recognise and appreciate the often impressive improvements in college performance and culture across the past two years.
- Leaders and managers have put in place strong and effective measures that have raised standards, enhanced morale and brought about improvements in outcomes for students. Managers and staff now have a clearer idea of their respective responsibilities, and managers have more effective oversight of curriculum quality. Probationary procedures are used very effectively to ensure the suitability and skills of new teachers.
- Managers use highly effective quality improvement methods which are raising standards and improving the ways that staff challenge and support their students. Classroom observations result in a good range of development activities for staff; managers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these activities particularly effectively. Staff understand the importance of quality-improvement and self-assessment activities and engage with them fully and constructively.
- Course reviews and self-assessments by curriculum area teams are generally accurate and self-critical. The whole-college self-assessment report accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses of provision and demonstrates leaders' and managers' thorough understanding of course data and other performance measures. Course teams know their students well and predict success rates for their programmes very accurately; however, teachers' predictions of grades, particularly high grades for A-level students, are less reliable.
- Partnerships with employers require improvement to ensure that all students can benefit from real-work experience that will prepare them fully for employment. Partnerships with specialist support agencies are good and ensure that students who require specialist help have good access to such services.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governors are effective in their support for the Principal and in the challenge they bring to leaders and managers. They have a very good understanding of college performance data, and are well informed about curriculum and pastoral activities.
 - Students and staff have a strong voice in college decision making, with students playing a particularly prominent role in evaluation and governance arrangements.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding**
 - Safeguarding is effective. Managers very effectively ensure the safety and well-being of students, especially the large number of particularly vulnerable students who attend the college. Students are safe on college premises, and a very strong culture of respect and mutual support ensures that students feel safe and enjoy a secure and enabling learning environment. A good range of tutorial and other activities ensures that students know how to keep safe online.
 - College leaders have been very active in meeting their responsibilities under 'Prevent' legislation. Staff, governors and students have benefited from a very good range of information and training about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Students enjoyed activities and wide-ranging discussions about the nature and meaning of British values during their tutorials.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Standards of teaching, learning and assessment are good and much improved since the previous inspection. Students benefit from the high expectations of staff, and a strong and well-established work ethic that ensures the majority of students make the progress of which they are capable. Arrangements for managers to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are robust and accurate.
- Students enjoy their lessons and are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers, who use their subject knowledge and industry experience to good effect. Most lessons are lively and well planned; students collaborate effectively to produce work of a good standard, developing their knowledge and skills beyond

the requirements of their qualifications. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding in sports and public services.

- In the few less-effective lessons, although teachers plan to meet the differing needs of students within the class, in practice the progress made by students of differing abilities, including the most able, is not sufficiently clear. These lessons lack sufficient pace to maintain all students' concentration and motivation. In too many cases, at the end of lessons, teachers fail to consolidate learning effectively and assess what has been achieved.
- Support for students is particularly well coordinated and highly effective. Support and teaching staff work with students to minimise the impact of any difficulties they have which inhibit learning, so that students, and in many cases parents and carers, have a clear understanding of progress and further needs. Students with additional learning needs are particularly well supported and achieve well.
- Learning programmes are well matched to individual students' needs. Managers and teachers are quick to recognise students who demonstrate ability beyond that indicated by their initial test results or previous attainment, and will adapt programmes and targets accordingly.
- Teachers develop students' English skills well. Vocational teachers ensure that standards of English are improved in lessons and through marked work. Teachers successfully develop the mathematical skills of high-needs students, but are less effective in this aspect of their work with students on 16 to 19 study programmes, which requires improvement.
- Students develop their work-related skills through a broad range of measures, including through links with employers, work placements, in-class activities and by practising their presentation skills to meet the requirements of future employers or higher-education institutions. The majority of students on study programmes benefit from useful work experience. However, proposals for study programmes do not clearly demonstrate how all students will benefit from high-quality work experience that is closely linked to future career plans and aspirations.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use examples of equality and diversity to good effect to develop students' broader knowledge of British society and world cultures. For example, groups have discussed illegal discrimination by employers, and significant events in history that are related well to recent events in the Middle East and around the world.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Students benefit from effective initial information and guidance before starting their courses, which ensure that they fully understand the high expectations demanded of them. Careers advice is good and is key to many students making successful objective decisions about their next steps. Thorough analysis of students' destinations confirms that a high proportion progress successfully to higher education or employment.
- Students' attitudes to learning and achieving their goals are particularly positive. Their attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The complex and demanding personal lives of a minority of students adversely affect their attendance, but effective support from staff ensures many remain on programme, improve their attendance and make good progress.
- Students quickly develop and enjoy improving their ability to work on their own through particularly effective use of compulsory study sessions. Groups in these study sessions are mixed across programmes and course levels and, as a result, students actively share their knowledge and experiences in ways that raise standards of learning and motivate them particularly well.
- The majority of students work well towards improving initial targets and grades. Students take pride in their work and are able to articulate well how they are improving and the progress they make in their grades and skills. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students achieving above their initial target grades has steadily improved and is now good.
- Students have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities; managers encourage them to comment on their experiences to ensure that they benefit from high-quality resources and a good learning environment. Managers and staff respond positively and promptly to student feedback.
- Teachers develop students' English skills well. However, despite recent improvement, they are less successful in developing and consolidating their students' mathematical skills, and this element of teaching and learning still requires improvement. Since the previous inspection, teachers' development of students' mathematical skills has improved, but not enough to ensure that all students are adequately motivated in lessons or that they understand the significance of these skills related to their vocational choices.

- The majority of students benefit from work experience and develop their work-related skills well. However, managers have not yet planned sufficient work placements to ensure that all students will benefit from a quality placement that improves their understanding of the employment sector to which they aspire.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- The large majority of current students are making good progress from their starting points. Levels of progress have increased on all programmes at all levels across the past three years. On vocational courses at level 3, students frequently make outstanding progress, achieving very significant gains in skills and understanding over their previous levels of attainment. Teachers and managers monitor progress effectively and review targets with students frequently. Staff encourage students to set ambitious targets for academic performance and support them very successfully to meet these.
- The standard of students' work is generally good, with the vast majority producing written and practical work that meets required standards for each qualification level. In vocational subjects, students produce work and carry out activities in lessons that prepare them well for further study and for entry to employment. Teachers give clear guidance in classes so that students understand what they need to do to improve; teachers also provide good guidance to enhance written skills and the quality of assignments. The vast majority of students understand how their classroom activities and homework assignments prepare them to be successful in their qualifications as well as for further study or employment.
- The vast majority of students achieve the qualifications for which they enrolled. On vocational courses at level 3, students achieve exceptionally well, frequently merit and distinction grades. However, at A level, too few students achieve the higher grades to which they aspire.
- The proportion of students achieving English GCSE at A* to C grades has increased since the previous inspection and is now a little above national rates for similar colleges. The proportion of adult students achieving at least a grade C in GCSE English has risen significantly and is now well above national rates.
- The proportion of students achieving A* to C grades in mathematics GCSE was very low in 2014/15. Leaders and staff have introduced a range of measures to improve performance in mathematics, and early indications from examinations taken in November suggest that these are having some beneficial impact. However, clear improvements are not yet evident for the majority of students.
- Students receive effective and sustained support to take their next steps in education, or into employment. A high proportion of students progress from preparatory and bridging courses into level 1 provision, and from level 2 provision to courses at level 3. Progression rates from level 1 to level 2 courses are good. Students benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance, and a good proportion progress from the college to university or higher-level study.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The large majority of students at the college are on 16 to 19 study programmes. Students progress and achieve well and benefit from effective initial advice and guidance that ensure that they are able to choose from a broad range of opportunities to meet their personal aspirations. Students often combine vocational, AS- and A-level subjects, for example vocational engineering and A-level mathematics. Such subject and course combinations ensure that students carefully match their programme to their skills and aspirations, and result in good progression opportunities to higher education and employment.
- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. The large majority of lessons are lively and teachers use a wide range of stimulating activities to maintain students' motivation. Progress in lessons is good and the standards of work produced are often beyond that required by the qualification.
- Teachers, tutors and learning support staff work effectively together to monitor and support students' progress. Most students have a good understanding of their progress, recognise the value of their learning and take responsibility for their education to exceed their initial target grades.
- Students' achievements on the core qualifications in their study programmes, and the progress they make from their starting points, are high. Standards of teaching and learning are good across study programmes, and are outstanding in public services and sports subjects. Students make good progress in developing their English skills through effective teaching, learning and assessment in discrete English lessons, and as a result of constructive feedback in vocational and academic lessons, for example, following teachers' careful correction of poor spelling and grammar.

- By contrast, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and skills development in mathematics below level 3 requires improvement. Students make insufficient progress in developing their mathematical skills because teachers do not provide suitable activities for the varying abilities of individuals in the same class. Teachers do not routinely give detailed feedback to help students understand what needs to be done to improve their work. Managers and teachers are quickly developing better ways of working and improving students' achievements in line with the high standards across the college, but improvements have yet to demonstrate clear impact for the majority of students.
- Students value highly, and overwhelmingly benefit from, very effective pastoral, academic and additional learning support. Tutors effectively coordinate the key components of each student's experience at college to ensure they make the best possible progress.
- Teachers promote understanding of equality of opportunity and cultural diversity well through classroom displays and sensitive discussion of topics in class. In many lessons, teachers thoughtfully and successfully explore and develop students' understanding of factors that influence British culture and society.

Provision for learners with high needs

is good

- The college currently has 152 students receiving high-needs support, from three local authorities, and the vast majority study on discrete programmes. Students make good progress and almost all achieve their main qualifications. Around a third of courses for high-needs students are non-accredited.
- Arrangements to enable students to make a smooth transition from school to college are particularly effective. Staff have very high aspirations for students and ensure that learning programmes are carefully and creatively planned to interest and challenge students, and to engage those who may have previously disengaged from learning. Students enjoy learning at the college and feel very safe and fully integrated into college life. At the end of their programmes, the vast majority of students progress to further study or employment.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to involve a good range of activities that interest and stimulate students. The excellent rapport between staff and students creates an open, inclusive and positive environment. Teachers use praise very effectively to motivate and encourage students.
- Teachers carefully check students' understanding and often use a coaching approach to challenge and extend learning, especially for more-able students. All students develop a wide range of skills relevant to independent living and employment that includes problem solving, speaking and listening, writing and numeracy skills. Students with more complex needs benefit well from developing skills essential for independent living such as cookery, money management and self-advocacy.
- Highly effective partnerships between educational and other professionals, such as disability nurses and speech and language therapists, enable students with complex needs to succeed. Strong links with local voluntary and community organisations ensure that students take part in a wide range of work-related activities that successfully assists them in overcoming the emotional, social and behavioural difficulties which can impede learning. However, the proportion of students taking part in external work experience is insufficient.
- Students receive very good support and make good progress. They are actively encouraged to assess their own progress and the level of support they need to achieve. However, the rigour and usefulness of the learning targets set by staff require improvement; managers and staff need to have a much clearer understanding of students' overall achievements, including those of students working towards non-accredited qualifications.
- Students make good progress developing their skills in mathematics and English. They are encouraged to practise frequently their vital reading and comprehension skills. However, students enrolled onto functional skills qualifications do less well and in a small number of lessons teachers do not check students' understanding of words, or encourage students to practise writing skills through, for example, note-taking.

Provider details

Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	987
Principal/CEO	Mr Matt Atkinson
Website address	www.stvincent.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	129	178	169	132	516	147	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	2	5	6	12	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Richard Beaumont, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Beynon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Griffin	Ofsted Inspector
Suki Dhesi	Ofsted Inspector
Roland White	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the assistant principal, 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 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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