

# Peterborough Regional College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130613

**Name of lead inspector:** Philippa Francis HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 16 December 2011

**Type of provider:** General Further Education College  
Park Crescent Campus

**Address:** Park Crescent  
Peterborough  
PE1 4DZ

**Telephone number:** 01733 767366

## Information about the college

1. Peterborough Regional College is a large college. Its main campus is about half a mile from the city centre. Two smaller sites include a media and journalism centre, a short distance from the main campus, and a city centre base for community learning, mainly basic skills. In addition to Peterborough, the college serves the surrounding rural and semi-rural areas.
2. The college offers courses from pre-entry to higher education level with provision in all subject areas. The largest numbers of learners study the following subject areas: health, public services and care; arts, media and publishing and preparation for life and work. Inspectors graded college and employment-based provision in engineering and health, care and public services and college-based provision in information and communication technology and performing arts and media.
3. Around 6,500 learners study at the college. Over two-thirds study full-time. Some 550 apprentices are in employment-based training. Most of the college's provision is government-funded.
4. In Peterborough, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics, is much lower than average. The city includes three wards with high social and economic deprivation. Unemployment in the city is much higher than average. Just under half of the college's learners come from areas with lower than average social and economic deprivation. The college enrolls a higher proportion of learners of minority ethnic heritage than is typical of the local and regional population.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following:
  - The League Football Education linking (sports studies)
  - JTL Training (construction)
  - Construction Skills (construction)
  - Scottish and Southern Electric (construction)
  - REMIT Group (motor vehicle)
  - West Anglia Training Association (engineering)
  - Babcock (motor vehicle)
  - EEF Ltd (engineering)
  - Northamptonshire Industrial Training Association Ltd (engineering)

6. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
- NHS (health and social care)
  - On-Site Training (land-based studies)
  - Princes Trust (employability and personal skills)

| <b>Type of provision</b>   | <b>Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11</b>  |
|--|--|
| <b>Provision for young learners:</b><br>14 to16<br><br>Further education (16 to18)<br><br>Foundation learning, including | 221 learners<br><br>2,411 full-time learners<br>394 part-time learners<br><br>478 full-time learners<br>159 part-time learners |
| <b>Provision for adult learners:</b><br>Further education (19+)  | 671 full-time learners<br>1,567 part-time learners   |
| <b>Employer provision:</b><br>Apprenticeships  | 550 apprentices  |

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b> | <b>Grade 2</b> |
|---|----------------|

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Capacity to improve</b> | <b>Grade 2</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|

|                           | <b>Grade</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Outcomes for learners     | 2            |
| Quality of provision      | 2            |
| Leadership and management | 2            |
| Safeguarding              | 1            |
| Equality and diversity    | 2            |

| <b>Subject Areas</b>                     | <b>Grade</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Health, care and public services         | 2            |
| Engineering and motor vehicle            | 2            |
| Information and communication technology | 3            |
| Performing arts and media                | 2            |

## Overall effectiveness

7. Peterborough Regional College is a strongly improving and good college because of very good leadership, experienced and capable management and the unequivocal commitment of all staff to provide the very best for learners. Learners' safety is paramount and arrangements to ensure this are outstanding.
8. Learners' outcomes are good. Learners enjoy college life fully and have good attitudes to their studies. Results have improved each year and are above average at most levels, except for those at pre-foundation level, which are below average. The large majority of learners across the majority of subjects make good progress; a minority of younger learners at advanced level in a few subjects do not always make as much progress as they could compared to their prior attainment. Learners' work is good. They learn the skills they need for employment well.

9. The large majority of lessons are good, often interesting and involve learners well. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for learners to ensure their full engagement and help them to achieve their maximum potential. Teachers use thorough assessment well to support learning. Employment-based learners receive good training and regular, rigorous assessment.
10. The curriculum is broad and highly responsive to the needs of learners and employers. However, learners' experiences are not enhanced by the widespread use of work experience across all subjects. Partnership work is outstanding and brings many benefits for learners. Staff provide a high level of care, guidance and support. They have improved advice and guidance. Their tracking of learners' progress is very careful. A minority of target setting is too general to be fully helpful.
11. Learners have a strong and influential voice and are thoroughly involved in college life. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Quality assurance is comprehensive and robust. Most self-assessment is critical and highly evaluative, but managers' evaluation of learners' progress is less well developed. Curriculum management is mostly good. These features support the college's good capacity to improve strongly.

## Main findings

- Success rates have increased and they are high. Younger learners achieve well at all main levels of study; adults achieve well at foundation and intermediate levels but have average success rates at advanced level. Learners produce good work and acquire a wide range of useful employability skills. The majority make good progress but a minority of younger learners do not always achieve their full potential. Success rates at pre-foundation level are below average.
- Success rates for employment-based learners increased notably in 2010/11 and they are high. The majority complete their qualifications within the time allowed. Apprentices' work is mostly good and their skill levels are high. Most apprentices develop confidence and maturity quickly. Employers value apprentices' skills and high standards of work across a range of small to very large businesses.
- Learners improve their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills alongside their vocational studies. In particular, a high number of learners are successful in gaining functional skills qualifications in mathematics, although success in other functional skills is less impressive. Learners gain a wide range of useful industry relevant additional qualifications.
- Learners' attitudes to work, college and community life are almost always good. A significant number use the opportunities made available to them to develop personally and socially, such as by taking on influential roles in the student union, or as class representatives or by being involved in the wide range of

inclusive college-based initiatives. Learners' awareness of health and well-being is outstanding.

- The large majority of lessons are good, interesting and involve learners in their own learning well. The best lessons have a brisk pace, plenty of challenge to develop and stretch learners and involve the good use of questions. Vocationally skilled teachers often act as good role models for learners, motivating and inspiring them. Assessment supports learning well. Teachers mark learners' work well. Resources are good and used well.
- A small minority of lessons are less effective because of too little challenge and a tendency for teachers to over direct learning. Planning of a few lessons is weak. While the lesson observation procedures are rigorous, accurate and inform self-assessment highly effectively, in a very few cases observers are insufficiently incisive in identifying areas for improvement.
- The range of courses is wide and meets the needs of many different groups of learners, including those underrepresented in further education. However, only a minority of full-time learners undertake work experience. Provision for employers is substantial and growing. Employers speak highly of its quality. Partnership work is extensive and highly productive. It adds considerable value to learners' experiences and improves their future opportunities.
- Good and improved support includes additional learning support and tutorial provision of a high standard. Retention and attendance rates are increasing. Readily available health and welfare support is of a very good quality. Staff provide their detailed advice and guidance with integrity. Learners value individual support highly, but the targets in individual learning plans are often too general to be very useful.
- The principal has raised the college's ambition, established an ethos of continuous improvement and a strong and determined focus on improving learners' outcomes. Staff feel valued and motivated. Targets for improvement are clear and realistic. Over recent years, the college has seen a steady growth in the number of learners aged 16 to 18, matched by a marked increase in success rates.
- Safeguarding of learners has a very high priority and is extremely effective. Equality and diversity have a high profile in all aspects of the college's work. The college has largely closed achievement gaps between different groups of learners. The college celebrates diversity well through a wide range of initiatives.
- Extensive quality assurance arrangements, including highly developed procedures for learners to contribute their views, ensure that managers identify and resolve underperformance quickly and vigorously. Self-assessment is highly developed, inclusive and reliable. The evaluation of a few measures of learners' progress is limited.

## What does Peterborough Regional College need to do to improve further?

- Share the highly effective practice in promoting good progress for young learners at advanced level in highly performing subjects with the few subjects where these learners do not consistently meet or exceed expectations compared to their prior attainment.
- Monitor the progress of learners at pre-foundation level closely to ensure that improvements put in place to increase their achievement are fully successful.
- Improve the small minority of unchallenging lessons by supporting teachers to increase the pace and the level of challenge and by ensuring the full engagement of learners.
- Provide work experience opportunities for more full-time learners by drawing on the good practice from other subject areas and by making more use of the excellent partnership arrangements with employers.
- Provide staff development to ensure that the learning targets are specific and sharply focused on actions to improve learners' achievement.
- Increase the rigour in the evaluation of measures of learners' progress, drawing on all relevant sources of evidence and using these to inform self-assessment fully.

## Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

### What learners like:

- very supportive teachers who push you to do your best and are really good role models
- plenty of individual help
- the safe college environment
- enjoyable courses
- help with getting a job after college
- learning new skills and the opportunities to move on to the next level of study
- the high level of respect between staff and learners
- help to build individuals' confidence.

### What learners would like to see improved:

- the number of computers available for private study
- the range and promotion of extra-curricular activities
- limited space for socialising between lessons.

**Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors****What employers like:**

- the professionalism and dedication of the staff
- very clear communication between employers and college staff
- a flexible approach to fit in with their business needs
- the skills that learners gain, which make a difference to their businesses.

**What employers would like to see improved:**

- no significant issues were raised by employers.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

12. Since the previous inspection, managers and staff have raised the standard of almost all aspects of the college's performance. The quality of teaching and learning has steadily improved and learners' success rates have increased notably. The college has successfully resolved almost all areas for improvement which inspectors identified at the last inspection, although the need to improve the quality of individual learning targets remains.
13. The college has a well-established culture of continuous improvement. Quality assurance is extremely comprehensive, consistently implemented and effective in improving performance. Well-developed self-assessment culminates in reports, which are largely accurate and reliable. Realistic and mostly ambitious targets drive improvements. Managers pay close attention to ensuring the sustainability of improvements. The college has the commitment, energy and resources to support continued improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

14. Learners' success rates on long courses increased between 2008 and 2010 at a faster rate than nationally. Rates increased further in 2011 and they are high. Younger learners' success rates are high at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. For adults they are high at foundation and intermediate level and average at advanced level. Success rates at pre-foundation level for both age groups are below average, largely because fewer than average learners achieve a pass in their qualifications. At all other levels, learners' pass rates are high or very high, whereas their retention rates are average. An above average percentage of learners gain grades at merit or distinction level on both intermediate and advanced level courses. Almost all subjects have success rates that are above average. Managers have in place actions to improve the few underperforming courses.
15. Most learners have high standards of work; they often develop high levels of practical vocational skills relevant to their subjects, such as in cookery, make-up artistry or mechanical engineering. Learners work confidently in realistic industry settings including gyms, hair salons and motor vehicle workshops. They use technical language appropriately and often match industry standards in the work they produce. Vocationally-skilled and experienced teachers provide good role models for learners, motivating them and setting high standards. Learners' attitudes to learning are mostly good; they enjoy lessons and their satisfactory attendance is improving.
16. The college has a higher than average proportion of learners starting with below average prior attainment. Teachers assess learners' starting points

accurately and are increasingly effective in helping the majority to learn quickly and effectively. The majority of learners make good progress in their studies, in particular, those that need extra help with their learning to achieve well. The difference in achievement between men and women has reduced considerably. A minority of mainly younger learners at advanced level do not make as much progress as they should in a few subjects, partly because some have low aspirations and, in other cases, because teachers do not challenge them sufficiently to reach their full potential.

17. Employment-based learners' achievement improved markedly in 2010/11. They achieve well and the majority complete their qualifications within the time allocated. The standard of these learners' work is often highly valued by employers and the skills they learn help them to be effective and successful employees in small to very large businesses. The differences between younger learners' and adult apprentices' success rates are reducing. This is in part because of a more rigorous admissions policy, which ensures that younger learners have appropriate entry requirements to cope with taking on an apprenticeship.
18. Learners' awareness of safety is very high. The many positive features of the college's safeguarding arrangements ensure that learners feel very secure and particularly well supported. Most readily follow safety rules, including correct procedures at the campus entry points. Learners routinely use appropriate personal protective equipment and apply safe working practices consistently. Their understanding of health and well-being topics is very good. A college-wide health check and close attention to identifying the needs of vulnerable learners creates a strong focus on health education topics, such as stopping smoking and the development of emotional resilience. Youth workers have a significant profile and are thorough in promoting learners' health and well-being. A wide range of fitness and sports activities takes place, but participation rates are not high.
19. Learners' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills are improving. In particular, a high percentage of learners succeeded in gaining functional skills qualifications at foundation and intermediate level in mathematics in 2010/11. Learners use information and communication technology regularly and are confident and often skilled in its use, although success rates in functional skills qualifications in this subject are below average. Learning about employability skills and help with securing employment are main strands in learners' careers education. Learners successfully take a wide range of additional qualifications that are relevant to their careers, covering areas such as in food safety, environmental awareness and work skills. Initiatives on managing money linked to a bank and a 'six book' reading challenge support learners to develop useful skills. Learners make a strong contribution to college and local life in a wide range of ways, including community projects and providing artistic performances.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

20. The large majority of lessons are good. Relationships between learners and teachers are mostly highly productive and learners often make good progress. Inspectors judged slightly fewer lessons to be outstanding than the college's profile of lesson observation grades suggests but they concluded that the observations are largely accurate, rigorous and reliable.
21. Teachers often plan lessons well. They consider all learners' needs and provide activities which interest and engage them. Lessons are often lively and enjoyable, with teachers and learners working well together. Teachers mostly use questions very effectively to help learners develop their knowledge and to check their understanding. In a few cases, the level of challenge in questions is not fully demanding of learners, particularly the more able. Learners are mostly confident to work independently or in groups, including helping each other to learn. In a number of subjects, such as hospitality and public services, teachers use realistic working environments very well to help learners develop vocational skills.
22. A small minority of lessons are less effective, often because of a lack of planning, pace and challenge. Teachers sometimes talk too much and do not make learners think for themselves. In planning these lessons, teachers make insufficient use of initial and ongoing assessments to ensure that they meet learners' needs. In these lessons, classroom management is often weak and learners become disengaged and spend too much time not on task.
23. Assessment is good. Teachers mark learners' work well. This is an improvement on the the previous inspection. Their correction of grammatical and other errors is thorough. They give clear and detailed feedback that helps learners to improve their work. Sensitive verbal feedback contributes well to learners' understanding of what they have achieved and how they can improve.
24. Resources for teaching are almost always good. Teachers use them well and occasionally imaginatively in lessons. The virtual learning environment is used well to help learners find additional information in most subjects. Teachers mostly use information and learning technology well, but a few are insufficiently skilled in the full use of interactive whiteboards.
25. A small team of well-trained staff carry out graded lesson observations. Standardisation and moderation of the observations is rigorous. Subject staff carry out ungraded, developmental observations. These contribute strongly towards teachers' professional development. Reports from the observation process are mostly clear and detailed. However, in a few cases, observers' identified areas for improvement are insufficiently precise.
26. The college offers a wide range of courses, covering all subject areas and levels of study. The provision provides good progression routes. Courses are available

at the main campus and, in order to promote access to basic skills, in 10 community venues. Published labour-market information and college contacts are used well to identify demand. The marketing of provision is good. The college website is particularly effective. Learners come to college from a wide geographical area, many making use of a subsidised bus service. Provision is available through a variety of modes of attendance. This includes provision which meets employers' and learners' specialist needs. Plans are in hand to fill the one or two gaps in provision, such as by offering a full-time advanced level motor vehicle course.

27. Full-time learners' courses include an appropriate mix of vocational work, courses to promote employability, tutorial provision and enrichment. The provision of work experience in a small minority of subjects is ineffective. A satisfactory range of cultural and sporting activities is available and the college has plans to develop sports activities further, led in part by learners' initiatives.
28. Extensive, responsive and highly productive work takes place with employers. Apprenticeship and full-cost provision are substantial and growing. The curriculum meets the needs of a wide range of learners, including recent immigrants or young people at risk of leaving education, by providing coherent and often innovative provision. Through its youth workers and projects, the college is active in promoting social cohesion. Partnership work is excellent and leads to many benefits. New land-based provision has been developed with an equestrian centre and the Heritage Skills Agency. A partnership with the Anglia Ruskin University has established a university centre on the college's campus, which recruits very well.
29. The college provides good care, guidance and support for learners. They are prepared well for their studies. Entry procedures, which include taster sessions, interviews and initial assessments, are effective. Learners speak positively about the quality of these processes. The tutorial programme provides a suitable range of personal, social and health education supported by a good range of centrally provided learning materials. The quality of the teaching and learning in tutorials is at least satisfactory and in most it is good.
30. Staff monitor learners' progress closely. They use collated data on progress, attendance and other information effectively in constructive, individual progress reviews. Learners, teachers, tutors and support workers use, set and monitor learning targets but these are often too general to be useful other than as a prompt for discussion. Reports to parents are satisfactory. Managers and staff monitor and manage attendance closely. Work-based learners receive good on-programme support through progress reviews and the work of training and placement advisors.
31. The additional needs of learners are identified early. Additional support is provided promptly in lessons and in individual and group sessions. Learners receiving support are very positive about its effectiveness. The college advertises all support services well. Learners in employment receive dedicated

and effective individual support. A wide range of adaptive technology supports disabled learners well. A charitable trust provides financial help to learners in need and is used appropriately to reward excellence.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

32. The principal has had a profound impact in raising the college's ambition, ensuring a strong focus on improving learners' outcomes and establishing an ethos of continuous and sustainable improvement. Managers support her very well. The mission, values and strategic direction are clear, complementary, well understood and strongly supported by governors and staff. Staff feel valued and motivated. Targets for improvement are clear, realistic, mostly challenging and highly visible to all staff in a pocket-sized plan. Managers take robust action when necessary to remedy underperforming courses. The aspiration of becoming an outstanding college is a realistic one.
33. Governors use their good range of individual expertise and interests well to understand the college and provide a valuable challenge and support to managers. They monitor the financial performance of the college closely and have an accurate appreciation of the quality of teaching and learning and performance data. Reporting to governors is timely and appropriately detailed. Governors periodically canvass the views of staff and learners through focus groups and make good use of their findings.
34. The very high priority placed on safeguarding of learners is immediately evident in the security system which restricts entry to buildings to those who have appropriate security clearance. Photo identity cards with colour-coded lanyards are used by staff and learners, with consistent challenge to anyone without identification. A consistent approach to security vetting of all staff, governors, volunteers and sub-contractors is in place, coupled with a comprehensive and reliable single central record providing a very high level of assurance that risk is minimised. All staff have received appropriate and timely training which is regularly updated. The college promotes learners' awareness of specific safeguarding issues exceptionally well through displays, screens, events and training opportunities. Management of health and safety is very good. The approach to risk assessment is comprehensive and reliable.
35. Equality and diversity have an equally high profile. Its promotion across the college is extremely good. Close monitoring and analysis of achievement gaps between different groups of learners has led to the closure of most. Course and subject area action plans target improvements specific to those areas. The equality and diversity committee and its four specialist sub-committees ensure that the equalities action plan, impact measures and impact assessments have a sharp focus, that monitoring is close and updating takes place regularly. The celebration of diversity in the college calendar is strong. It is a prominent feature in displays across the college. The college's learning and social environment is socially cohesive and harmonious. However, a very few staff do

not always display the degree of sensitivity and responsiveness expected by the college's equality and respect agendas.

36. Opportunities for learners to contribute their views and influence decision-making are highly developed. Class representatives, currently numbering about 200, receive valuable training for their role, meet to consider subject area matters and assemble termly as a 'parliament' to discuss college-wide issues. Examples of learners influencing developments are numerous and learners contribute well to subject area self-assessment. A range of initiatives is in place to engage more closely with parents.
37. Extensive quality assurance arrangements, which extend to work-based and sub-contracted provision, ensure that underperforming courses and wider areas for improvement are quickly identified and addressed. Self-assessment is particularly well-developed and inclusive. Rigorous validation draws on external expertise and helps ensure that course reviews, self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans are thorough and effective tools for improvement. Employers have an opportunity to review and comment on self-assessment reports. These provide well-evidenced and largely accurate evaluations of college performance. Inspectors agreed with almost all of the grading judgements in the reports. However, the evaluation of learners' progress measures is underdeveloped.
38. Managers at all levels use performance data with confidence. Arrangements for staff appraisal and staff development are very good. Reviews based on staff performance provide valuable affirmation of high standards and identify high performance well. They accurately identify individual development needs which, together with college priorities, inform the extensive staff development plans.
39. Good financial management provides the college with resilience against future financial threats, a better range of strategic options and enables good improvements to the estate and learning environment. A clear commitment to more sustainable materials and practices informs these improvements. With high success rates and almost all aspects of provision improving strongly, the college provides good value for money.

## Subject areas

### Health, social care and public services

### Grade 2

#### Context

40. Full-time and part-time courses are available from foundation to advanced level in health and social care, and public services. Of 453 learners, just under half are on public services courses, the large majority are aged 16 to 18 and most study full-time. Just over two-thirds of learners are women. Approximately a third of learners are of minority ethnic heritage. Some 24 apprentices are on employment-based provision in health and social care.

#### Key findings

- Success rates on the large majority of courses increased between 2008 and 2011 and they are high at foundation and advanced level. Success rates are average at intermediate level in public services, but are below average in health and social care, largely because too many learners did not complete their course. On this course, current learners' progress, staying-on rate and attendance are improving significantly.
- Learners enjoy their studies, are highly responsible and have good attitudes to learning. They take pride in their work. Learners' self-confidence increases alongside their understanding of community and individuals' needs. In particular, they develop a good awareness of different cultures and where inequalities may arise. Most learners move on to study for higher qualifications or into employment on completing their courses.
- In 2010/11, success rates for the very small number of health and social care apprentices were average but too few completed their courses within the time allocated. The larger group of current apprentices is making substantially better progress and most are on track to complete on time. Employers give apprentices increased responsibility and promotion as they gain new skills and qualifications.
- Learners feel very safe and are highly confident in knowing where to go to seek support. Learners have a good understanding of safe working practices and how they can manage risks to themselves, to others in college and to those they care for, serve and protect at work. For example, public services learners contribute to campus security by working with staff to undertake identification checks.
- Learners make informed choices about their health and well-being. They receive effective support and considerable advice about healthy lifestyles through their coursework and from visiting speakers such as health professionals. Learners on most courses make a good contribution to the community through volunteering and through work-placements including residential care homes.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers use learners' work experience effectively to improve understanding. Health and social care learners receive clear feedback from employers and teachers following observations undertaken during work placements. Learners self-evaluate their strengths and development areas well. Public services learners develop particularly good teamwork and leadership skills by undertaking realistic work activities.
- In the minority of less effective lessons, the pace is slow, challenge is insufficient and learners lose focus on what they should be learning. In addition, ongoing assessment of learners' understanding and target setting to boost their rate of progress are underdeveloped. Assessment of coursework is thorough. Feedback for improvement is clear. Internal verification is robust.
- A good range of provision provides clear progression routes, which benefits learners. Thorough assessment of learners' skills at induction informs their individual programme of study. College staff involve employers effectively in planning learning and development opportunities for learners. Learners receive very effective support in preparing to enter employment.
- Good partnerships with a wide range of external organisations including the fire service and local health trusts help learners well. However, opportunities for improving staff's awareness of new working methods in care and public service settings through industrial updating are underdeveloped. Learners have good opportunities to develop personally and socially through enrichment activities, careers events and trips.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners for whom English is not their first language receive support to improve language skills prior to and during their main course. Employment and college-based learners use very effective personal support well. Advice and guidance are easy to source, helpful and valued by learners. Written targets in individual learning plans are often insufficiently specific to help learners gain the highest grades.
- Good management has increased the focus on quality improvement, albeit relatively recently. Managers' close monitoring of individual learners' progress and support needs has a positive and measurable result. Strong management of employment-based provision using robust tracking is increasing apprentices' success rates. The staff team work enthusiastically and are supportive of each other.
- Staff contribute fully to the broadly accurate self-assessment, which is helpful in identifying areas for improvement. Managers use data effectively to monitor retention and success rates at weekly team meetings. Managers implement successful actions to improve underperforming courses. They ensure that equality and diversity are promoted well. Safeguarding arrangements are of a high standard. A few classrooms are too small for the size of the group.

### **What does Peterborough Regional College need to do to improve further?**

- Monitor the progress of learners on intermediate level courses and apprentices closely and frequently. Take prompt action to provide extra support where



learners are at risk of underachievement or of not completing their courses within the time allocated.

- Improve the less effective lessons by helping teachers to use ongoing assessment more often to check on learners' understanding and increase the pace of learning and the extent of challenge through careful planning.
- Support teachers to increase the quality, effectiveness and use of specific and measurable targets both in lessons and in individual learning plans.
- Build on the strong relationships with partners to provide opportunities for teachers to update their vocational experience. Support teachers to be able to make use of these opportunities.

## Engineering and motor vehicle

## Grade 2

### Context

41. Full- and part-time courses are available in motor vehicle maintenance, mechanical and electronic engineering, welding and aerospace from foundation to advanced level. Of the 272 learners, just over half are full-time. The large majority are aged 16 to 18. Some 116 learners follow part-time courses and 35 pupils from local schools attend on a day-release basis. Of 101 apprentices, most are advanced. A few learners are women and a small minority are of minority ethnic heritage.

### Key findings

- Learners' success rates have increased and they are high on most full-time courses. In engineering, intermediate level learners' success rates were below average in 2010/11 but current learners are making good progress. Success rates for apprentices are high, having increased notably; in particular, advanced apprentices are very successful. Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Learners develop good industrial skills. At work and in lessons, learners make good progress and perform engineering tasks to a high standard. For example, learners complete vehicle maintenance procedures competently and use high quality technical drawing skills to produce detailed computer-aided designs. Full-time learners achieve good, relevant employability skills.
- Learners feel safe and work safely in practical workshops at the college and in the workplace. Learners are fully aware of their health and safety responsibilities, which teachers and employers reinforce well in theory lessons and the work place. Risk assessments are comprehensive and displayed prominently in all practical workshops. Teachers and employers fully implement the good safeguarding measures.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well-planned including activities, which make good use of the high quality resources to enthuse and extend learners' knowledge and skills. Learners work very well individually and in groups. In a few lessons, teachers do not consistently meet the needs of more able learners, in part because of underdeveloped planning of activities to stretch these learners.
- Assessment for work-based learners is good. Assessors visit apprentices regularly to complete assessments and are very responsive to learners' requests when additional assessment opportunities arise. Most assessment is by direct observation and rigorous. Well-produced portfolios contain clearly referenced and valid evidence. Reviews focus well on the setting of targets to maintain progress towards successful completion of qualifications.
- Assessment for college-based learners closely meets their needs. They receive timely and constructive feedback on their progress and how to improve. Learners benefit from using the virtual learning environment, although the

availability of e-learning resources for private study or home use is limited. A few teachers do not make effective use of the interactive capabilities of electronic whiteboards.

- Learners thoroughly enjoy their learning. Managers and staff actively seek and use their views to develop and improve the provision. Learners and employers speak very highly of the college. When learners raise issues, managers are quick to respond and resolve any concerns. Employers appreciate the information the college provides to inform them of what their apprentices are studying each week, which helps to link on- and off-the-job training well.
- The range of courses is good. Progression opportunities are available and well used in almost all subjects including into higher advanced level courses for mechanical engineers and in electronics. The college has established plans to allow learners to progress into full-time advanced level courses in motor vehicle studies. Teachers do not use work experience sufficiently to improve the experiences of full-time learners.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Staff identify those at risk of not completing their course promptly and they provide effective support to help learners achieve. Learners and apprentices speak highly of the regular support they receive. Learners benefit from a range of cross-college and subject activities to extend their knowledge about health and well-being.
- Partnerships with employers and external organisations are very good. Partnerships result in increased availability of apprenticeships and the development of full-cost courses. Employers value their relationship with the subject area and they are pleased with apprentices' skill development.
- Managers promote high standards and implement effective quality assurance measures that have increased success rates on most courses. Analysis of the performance of different groups of learners is good. No significant differences exist between success rates for groups of learners. The subject area promotes equality and diversity well in a range of ways, although engineering teachers do not reinforce equality and diversity themes consistently in theory lessons.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate, but overstates a very few strengths compared to inspectors' judgements, such as in the effectiveness of sharing of good practice. Staff contribute fully to the self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, which they review frequently. Managers understand data and use these well to inform improvement actions. Learning resources for new aerospace courses are limited.

### **What does Peterborough Regional College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve teachers' use of the interactive aspect of electronic whiteboards by developing their skills in this area. Increase e-learning resources to support learners' self-directed or home-based study.
- Put in place the planned advanced level full-time motor vehicle course.

- Use the good partnerships to develop work experience opportunities for full-time learners.
- Increase resources and equipment for aerospace learners.

## Information and communication technology

## Grade 3

### Context

42. The college offers courses from foundation to advanced level for practitioners and users. Most courses require full-time study. Of the 300 learners, two thirds are aged 16 to 18 and most study full-time. Nearly half of learners are of minority ethnic heritage. A small minority are women. Courses are available at the main campus and at the city learning centre.

### Key findings

- On the majority of courses success rates are increasing, but overall are average. Success rates on advanced level courses are mostly high but are below average or low and are not increasing on foundation and intermediate level courses. Different groups of learners have no significant differences between their success rates.
- Current learners are making improved and good progress; they enjoy their learning. Most learners are developing their skills well compared with their starting points. Inspectors observed relatively inexperienced users using business application software with confidence and advanced level learners installing hard drives into computer systems expertly and in an assured way.
- Learners judge the college is a safe environment in which to learn. They know how to use the internet safely and are aware of what to do if they experience cyber-bullying. Wall displays and computer screens reinforce internet safety well. Learners are aware of and use safe working practices such as adopting the correct posture when working at computers.
- Most lessons are satisfactory. Individual coaching, which is in use widely in lessons, is often good. In the most effective lessons, teachers use approaches, which match learners' needs well. Less effective lessons are uninspiring and do not meet the needs of all learners sufficiently often because of weak planning. Lesson plans do not consistently make good use of initial assessment information.
- Teachers often do not give learners in workshop sessions clear or motivating short-term targets to help structure their work and help them make good progress. Too many targets on individual learning plans focus on achievement of qualifications rather than gaining skills or knowledge. Learners' progress reviews take place at appropriate intervals, but a minority of recording is of poor quality.
- The range of courses is satisfactory. However, as the college recognises, the curriculum is underdeveloped in meeting the wider needs of local employers and in providing better opportunities for subject-related work experience. Progression routes are available from foundation to advanced level. At advanced level, the range of diploma courses covers appropriate specialist areas such as software development or business computing.

- Learners receive good care, guidance and support. Learners comment on teachers' helpfulness and the extent of their support. Personal tutors are increasingly effective in supporting learners to stay on their courses. The provision of additional learning support is highly effective in helping current learners' progress, particularly in helping with their language needs.
- Recent changes in management are bringing about much needed improvements to several consistently underperforming courses. Course targets are set and managers are placing a higher emphasis on meeting these than previously. Teachers have responded positively to the recently introduced actions to improve the quality of the teaching, although it is too soon to judge the impact.
- Effective appraisals ensure that each member of staff has an agreed action plan, which managers monitor closely. All staff have appropriate opportunities for staff development, although the opportunities for industrial or subject knowledge updating are limited. Managers recognise the need to increase partnerships with employers to resolve this problem.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, although a few strengths and areas for improvement are overstated. The report is appropriately self-critical and evaluative and involved all staff and learners' representatives. The very good practice shown by a few teachers has not been effectively shared with other teachers. Safeguarding arrangements are good.

### **What does Peterborough Regional College need to do to improve further?**

- Monitor underperforming courses at foundation and intermediate level closely to ensure that success rates increase. Reinforce the emphasis on meeting targets set for individual courses at all levels of management.
- Improve teaching and learning by more effective sharing of the good practice shown by a minority of teachers across the teaching team. Ensure that lesson plans clearly identify the specific individual needs of learners and that planned activities match these needs.
- Provide learners in workshop-based lessons with clear and measurable short-term targets to motivate them and ensure they make good progress.
- Develop links with employers to provide opportunities for work experience and industrial updating for staff.

## Performing arts and media

## Grade 2

### Context

43. Full- and part-time courses are available from foundation to advanced level. Courses cover performing arts, drama, music, music technology, media production, production arts, print-based media and photography. Of the 386 learners, most are aged 16 to 18 and almost all study full-time. About half of learners are women. A very small minority are of minority ethnic heritage.

### Key findings

- Success rates are high and increasing on most courses. Success rates are consistently very high on advanced level national diplomas in music and performing arts and increased substantially in media at this level in 2010/11. Success rates for the intermediate level diploma in media and the foundation level photography certificate are below average, largely due to below average retention.
- Learners make good progress, gain confidence and develop self-esteem. Their work is of a high standard in all specialisms, particularly in dance and performing arts. Learners acquire specialist skills quickly and effectively. They enjoy college, feel safe and value the safe and secure environment. Learners use safe working practices consistently in practical studios and when working in public spaces.
- Learners make good use of a range of community projects to develop their skills. For instance, performing arts learners visit local primary schools with a Bollywood workshop, and all learners take part in an arts festival, which runs each year in the city. Media learners undertake commissioned video productions. Music learners hold weekly music performances, which demonstrate their skills very well.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a variety of methods to interest and engage learners. The better lessons are highly motivating and energising, and learners engage enthusiastically in a range of stimulating practical activities. In the less successful lessons, teachers do not use questions effectively to assess understanding and consolidate learning.
- Learners benefit highly from their teachers' industrial experience. Assessment practices are good and support learning well. Sampling of assessment to assure standards and the quality of feedback is robust. Staff and learners use individual learning plans consistently well to set and monitor challenging targets.
- The wide range of subjects and levels provides learners with clear progression routes from foundation to advanced level and meets learners' needs very well. Learners' progression to higher education is good. Enrichment is of a high standard including visits to theatres and galleries, as well as dance and theatre

workshops. Learners benefit from guest speakers who are professional practicing artists or performers.

- Good partnerships include close collaboration with a local theatre, where learners have the opportunity to participate in productions and gain significant vocational experience. Other partnership projects include producing work for local industries to gain insight into current professional practices.
- Support for learners is good. The identification of learning support needs takes place early and support is put in place quickly. Teachers know their learners well and are sensitive to their individual needs, providing good pastoral and academic support. Learners value the advice and guidance they receive from their teachers. Learning coaches work closely with learners to improve their study techniques.
- Good leadership and management have ensured that success rates have increased in most cases. Managers' actions to ensure better induction processes and initial guidance for learners have already made an impact. Managers communicate well with staff, who feel well supported and are keen to implement strategies for improvement. Staff make good use of opportunities for development and training.
- All staff are fully involved in considering course reviews to inform the self-assessment report, which is broadly accurate although grades for a few aspects are too high. Grades for lessons awarded through the lesson observation system did not always match the grades awarded at inspection, indicating that observers are not consistently accurate.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well. Learners' views are thoroughly encouraged, which staff gather to improve the provision. Specialist accommodation and resources are very good, including broadcasting, dance, media and music technology facilities. Specialist software is available on large numbers of computers to support learners' media work. Teachers are well qualified and use their experience effectively to promote learning.

### **What does Peterborough Regional College need to do to improve further?**

- Monitor retention rates closely on the foundation level photography course and the intermediate level diploma in media. Take prompt action where learners are at risk of underachievement.
- Help teachers to make better use of a range of questioning techniques to check learners' understanding and consolidate their learning in lessons, particularly in media.



## Information about the inspection

44. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
45. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at the questionnaires that learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from courses across the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Peterborough Regional College**  
**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

| Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b><br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate                              | Overall  | 16-18<br>Learner<br>responsive | 19+<br>Learner<br>responsive | Employer<br>responsive |
|--|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>   |          |                                |                              |                        |
| Full-time learners   | 2,578    | 1,998                          | 580                          | 0                      |
| Part-time learners   | 2,737    | 630                            | 1,321                        | 588                    |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>2</b>               |
| <b>Capacity to improve</b>   | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>2</b>               |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?   | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals?  | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners progress?   | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?                              | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How safe do learners feel?   | 1        |                                |                              |                        |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>  | 1        |                                |                              |                        |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>  | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| <b>Quality of provision</b>  | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>2</b>               |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?   | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?  | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?                        | 1        |                                |                              |                        |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?                                    | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>2</b>               |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?                     | 1        |                                |                              |                        |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>                         | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?  | 1        |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?  | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?                             | 2        |                                |                              |                        |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?                         | 2        |                                |                              |                        |

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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