

Wiltshire College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Information about the provider

1. Wiltshire College in the south west of England has four main centres in Chippenham, Lackham (formerly Wiltshire's land-based college), Trowbridge and Salisbury. The merger of Wiltshire College and Salisbury College in January 2008 produced a substantial new college. The college's last full inspection was in October 2007.
2. The college offers courses in all 15 subject areas and in many of these has provision at pre-entry level through to higher education. The college works extensively with the Ministry of Defence (MoD). It has Skillset Academy status in film and broadcast media, and is a founder college of the National Skills Academy for creative and cultural occupations. The college holds a contract to deliver personal and community development learning.
3. The population of Wiltshire is over 430,000, of which 4% describe themselves as 'other than White British'; the Moroccan, Polish and Traveller communities are significant minority groups. Some 7% of the population is linked to the MoD.
4. Wiltshire College faces significant competition from both within and outside the county, including six other colleges. In the north and west of the county many schools have sixth forms. The proportion of school leavers in Wiltshire with five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is above the national average. The merger with Salisbury College has seen the addition of A-level provision to Wiltshire College's curriculum offer. The proportion of the college's learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly in line with the proportion in Wiltshire.
5. Some 75% of the college's learners on long courses are aged 16 to 18. The most popular areas of study for these learners are in health and social care, and childcare; and, in visual and performing arts and media. Around half of the college's apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Business accounts for some 20% of learners, with construction, engineering, hairdressing, and hospitality and catering each having substantial numbers of learners.
6. The core purpose of Wiltshire College is 'to provide flexible, exciting learning and training opportunities that enable learners to succeed'.
7. Organisations providing training on behalf of the college include:
 - Alert Training (apprenticeships)
 - Lean Education and Development (apprenticeships)
 - Valkyrie Support Services (apprenticeships)
 - F&CT (National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the work-place)
 - Quality Transport Training (apprenticeships).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation Learning</p>	<p>79 full-time learners 450 part-time learners</p> <p>3,456 full-time learners 437 part-time learners</p> <p>1,057 learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)</p>	<p>832 full-time learners 2,724 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>1,273 learners 1,481 apprentices</p>
<p>Adult and community learning</p>	<p>1,981 learners</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	
Health and social care and childcare	3
Animal care and veterinary science	3
Plumbing (work-based learning)	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Visual arts, and media	2
Business and administration (work-based learning)	3

Overall effectiveness

8. This is a satisfactory college. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. Progress has been inconsistent as the college has emerged from merger with the old Salisbury College, management restructuring and recent stabilisation of its financial position. The college has achieved mixed success in rectifying areas for improvement from the last inspection. However, improving the quality of teaching and learning, so that this is now good, and managing successfully the merger with the old Salisbury College, are key accomplishments which have benefited learners.
9. Outcomes for learners remain satisfactory, but they are good for learners aged 16 to 18 at foundation level and for learners aged 14 to 16. However, the college has been slow to improve learners' success at advanced level which has declined from the previous year. Variation in success across the range of the college's work is significant. These aspects were both key areas for improvement from the last inspection.
10. Inspectors often found the standard of work and progress for current learners to be good. The college is making measurable progress in tackling its longstanding challenge to retain learners on their courses. Learners enjoy mainly good teaching, good overall support and constructive feedback on how to improve the quality of their work. The quality of their accommodation and learning resources are good. The range of courses mostly meets their needs well.
11. Good arrangements for safeguarding ensure that learners feel particularly safe. Safe working practices are an integral part of college life. The college culture is one of mutual respect between all participants. However, strategies to help teachers develop learners' understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity during teaching sessions, and how these would apply to their work in areas such as customer service, are not as yet well established.
12. The Principal and senior leaders, supported by the governing body, have a strong vision for improvement and have demonstrated their powerful commitment to ensuring that financial constraints do not impact on learners' experience. Value for money is good.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of learners who succeed on their courses continues to vary across the range of the college's work. However, college data in the current year indicate that the college is tackling effectively its longstanding difficulty in ensuring learners complete their courses.
- The proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 who succeeded on advanced courses declined in 2010/11 to below the national averages, and these learners did not make expected progress from their starting points on entry to their studies.

- In the subject areas inspected, the standard of learners' work and progress is often good. Learners develop valuable practical skills that equip them well for future employment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The quality of lessons is still variable and in some areas it is satisfactory rather than good. The college is effective in spreading good practice in teaching and learning across the college and acknowledges that it needs to continue with this work.
- In the best lessons teachers planned challenging and vocationally relevant tasks for all learners that kept them working hard. Learners developed skills and understanding rapidly and they enjoyed their lessons. Their progress was slower in lessons where they were not sufficiently challenged and sometimes they became bored and distracted. Not all teachers effectively promoted equality and diversity in their work.
- Teachers' use of information and learning technology (ILT) and the accommodation and resources available to support learning are generally good. Some areas are very well equipped. Learning resource centres (LRCs) are well equipped and provide good access to computers. The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is used very well in many areas, but it requires further development in others.
- The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is generally good. A comprehensive offer of courses is carefully planned, meeting local needs and improving learners' employability. The foundation learning and provision for learners aged 14 to 16 are particularly appropriate. A few aspects advanced provision do not fully meet all learners' needs. Progression to more demanding courses or employment is good.
- Work with partner organisations is extensive and effective, helping to improve the college's provision and contributing to wider initiatives. Well-established links with sector skills councils and national academies improve strategic aspects of provision. Good work with the local authority, schools and professional bodies guides and improves college programmes. Close liaison with specialist organisations enhances services in aspects such as counselling and health care.
- A well-managed student support and engagement directorate provides a very effective and integrated care, support and advice service for learners. Enrichment and support activities, neatly linked in a 'community campus' concept, lead to innovative and engaging ways of improving learners' understanding of a range of personal issues. Additional learning support is satisfactory and academic support generally good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The priorities of a merger with an under-performing college and difficulties arising from weak financial reporting have delayed the college's ability to raise success rates effectively, particularly at advanced level. However, the financial position is now stable and quality improvements are beginning to impact on the quality of provision. Value for money is good.

- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. The college has comprehensive and effective procedures in place to support the health, safety and welfare of its learners and staff. Close working with external agencies, excellent communication and effective staff training have all helped to ensure that learners feel very safe.
- Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and the college has a culture of mutual respect between all participants. Analysis of equalities data is insufficient to enable the college to be fully confident that there are no gaps in the achievement of different groups of learners. Strategies to help teachers develop learners' wider knowledge of diversity during lessons are not well established.
- The college's self-assessment is broadly accurate but does not explore sufficiently the reasons for the low success rates at advanced level. Quality improvement plans, particularly around improving success rates, are not always sufficiently well conceived to bring about the improvement sought. The quality of provision is still too variable across the subject areas offered.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the current focus on implementing, monitoring and evaluating strategies to improve learners' retention across the range of the college's work.
- Critically review the advanced level offer in all subject areas, and where appropriate make arrangements, such as providing additional courses in hairdressing and more flexible arrangements in animal care, so that a wider range of learners can take courses and succeed.
- Provide more specific objectives for the work of learning support assistants (LSAs) in lessons; and ensure more consistent incorporation and management of additional learning targets for supported learners in electronic individual learning plans (e-ILPs) to enable learners to obtain the greatest benefit.
- Ensure that self-assessment is used more effectively to provide a sharper focus on learners' underperformance at advanced level and improve quality improvement planning by ensuring that actions planned are the most appropriate to resolve the issues being addressed.
- Carry out more systematic review of learners' performance to identify both gaps in achievement and good outcomes by specific groups, in order to plan for targeted improvement and the sharing of effective practice.
- Ensure that equality and diversity are promoted effectively in lessons by providing effective staff development and ensuring that teaching observations consistently report on the quality of this work in lessons.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the support from teachers both in and outside lessons
- the range of additional activities available
- the informal but professional atmosphere in learning activities

- how well teachers use their industry experience to illustrate learning
- learning through practical work, group work and discussion
- how well the college receives and acts on their views for whole-college issues
- developing their self-confidence and vocational skills
- how the college's VLE helps them to develop their learning and catch up on work outstanding
- earning while they learn.

What learners would like to see improved:

- greater consistency in how well feedback on their work helps them to improve their performance
- a range of less expensive options in the college's catering outlets
- access to computers for private study at the Salisbury campus
- the college's responsiveness to their views at course level.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the wide range of courses, and the broadening range of courses for employers in the Salisbury area in particular
- how well on-the-job and off-the-job training fit together to support learning and progress
- the high standards of learners' work
- the knowledge and experience of Wiltshire College staff
- the frequency of visits to employers and apprentices
- how much the training benefits their businesses.

What employers would like to see improved:

in a few instances:

- greater involvement in reviewing learners' progress
- quicker responses to day-to-day queries.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

13. The college's success in bringing about improvement in outcomes for learners has been mixed. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory but vary significantly across the range of the college's work. The college has made significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, which are now good, and has a good overall view of the quality of lessons. The college has worked very hard to maximise the potential of its buildings and has used its finances very well to improve teaching resources and develop innovative teaching areas in existing buildings.
14. Self-assessment is broadly accurate but does not provide sufficient analysis of the quality of teaching and learning linked to learners' performance at different course levels and in different subject areas. The college has been successful in managing the merger with the old Salisbury College, but has an inconsistent record of rectifying areas for improvement from the last inspection, including success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 at advanced level, which remains a key challenge. However, college data suggest that the college is making progress in its longstanding difficulty around improving learners' retention.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

15. College success rates overall have remained around the national average since 2009/10, although learners' success rates are inconsistent across different aspects of provision. Outcomes for learners aged 14 to 16 are good. The college has significantly improved success rates at foundation level, bringing these to above the national average for learners aged 16 to 18. However, at advanced level, success rates for learners have declined and are now below average. Learners on these courses have not made expected progress relative to their prior attainment. The college has been slow to improve the quality of its provision at AS level, and learners on these courses continue to achieve at below the national average level.
16. The college is taking appropriate steps to ensure more learners complete their courses than in previous years; in-year data indicate that these measures are succeeding. In the subject areas inspected the standard of learners' work was frequently good and learners made good progress.
17. In work-based learning the college was slow to improve success rates within the planned timescales in its Train to Gain provision, which improved to the national average for the first time in 2010/11. Broadly average overall success rates in apprenticeships in 2010/11 disguise variations in learners' performance through the range of subject areas.
18. For those learners who succeed on their courses, progression to other training or employment is good. A good proportion move into higher education. A large

number of well-managed work placements, in such areas as childcare and animal management, help learners understand the realities of employment.

19. Learners feel particularly safe at all the Wiltshire College sites. Physical security measures are relatively low key, but staff and learners work successfully together to create a safe environment. Safe working practices are an integral part of the college routine.
20. An extensive range of well-attended 'community campus' events gives learners a good understanding of health and well-being. Learners make a very positive contribution to the community. On campus this includes involvement as class representatives, in the student union and in helping with aspects of the 'community campus' programme. Learners usefully help develop some of the college's on-line learning and support services. Links with local organisations and charities are good. A strong focus throughout the college on sustainable development impacts positively on learners' understanding of the topic.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

21. The college has a good overview of the quality of teaching and learning. Managers focus effectively on how well learners are developing the skills and knowledge they need. The college has completed an extensive series of lesson observations which informs the comprehensive programme of professional development for teachers. Practical support for teachers is a central element of the college's work. However, lesson observations do not identify routinely and consistently how well teachers promote equality and diversity in their lessons.
22. Many areas have pockets of outstanding practice and the majority of teaching is good. Lessons for learners aged 14 to 16 are consistently good. However, a small amount of teaching and learning is inadequate, and some is no better than satisfactory. The college has identified this variation and is providing effective support for teachers to help them to improve their work. This approach has started to pay dividends, but there is more work to do to ensure that all learners have a consistently high-quality experience across the whole college. Many learners are well supported by learning support assistants during their lessons, but the college has identified insufficient links between teachers and the support assistants in their lessons.
23. In outstanding lessons, teachers set clear tasks that stimulated and challenged learners. They used questions well to extend learners' knowledge and to check carefully that learners understood the topic being covered. In the best practical sessions, teachers frequently required learners to review their work to see if it met a sufficiently high standard. In all these lessons teachers made sure that learners made rapid progress in developing their skills and understanding.
24. In satisfactory lessons and the small number of inadequate lessons, some learners were insufficiently challenged by the teacher. Sometimes they became bored and distracted. Some teachers were less effective at using questions well.

The college has identified that teaching needs to be more innovative and to generate more enthusiasm from learners. The more skilled teachers are providing support for staff in a variety of ways, including working alongside teachers in lessons, providing professional development sessions on specific topics and offering practical and supportive lesson observations.

25. Many teachers use ILT well in their lessons. Most classrooms and workshops are equipped with interactive whiteboards or computer projection systems which teachers use well, but which were seldom used by learners during lessons. The learning resource centres on each site are well equipped and provide good access to computers. The college is increasingly using its VLE to support teaching and learning.
26. Classrooms, studios, salons and workshops mostly provide a good environment for learning. Many are equipped to industry standards. Teachers ensure that learners present a professional face to the public in areas such as catering and hairdressing. Health and safety are given a high priority in lessons.
27. Learners' work is marked fairly and detailed feedback helps learners to improve their work. In a few instances, learners' portfolios do not fully reflect the full range of skills that learners demonstrate. The college has identified a need to ensure a more consistent approach to assessment and now has a team of lead internal verifiers to lead this work. Learners' views show that aspects of assessment have improved in the last year.
28. The college's provision meets well the needs of learners and employers across and beyond Wiltshire. The range and level of provision are comprehensive and well balanced between the college's sites. Opportunities for appropriate progression are good, although in a few areas, including hairdressing and animal care, aspects of the level 3 programmes do not meet all learners' needs. The college is flexible in meeting the diverse needs of employers and partner organisations such as the local authority. For instance, the larger-than-usual offering of foundation-level courses and courses for those with learning difficulties reflects a requirement identified by the local authority. Additional training, in areas such as plumbing, helps both employers and learners. The well-developed and supported on-line learning resources effectively help meet the needs of learners for flexible and extended learning. Learners, employers and partners take an active part in reviewing and improving the provision.
29. The extensive, inspiring and very well-managed 'community campus' provision enhances the learners' experience at college. It provides personal and social development for learners, including Every Child Matters themes, through enrichment activities, and encompasses many other aspects of student support, such as counselling, careers advice, finance and student liaison. The scheme also provides good resources for use in tutorials to reinforce its themes. Well-attended regular or one-off events cover such things as developing learners' understanding of diversity and raising awareness of sustainability issues. It also provides an extensive and imaginative range of social and sporting events.

30. The college's work with a wide range of partner organisations is particularly beneficial in developing the college's own provision and aiding improvements elsewhere. Work with the local authority, over 40 schools and with local professional organisations is particularly effective in planning county-wide provision. Links with a large number of local employers are carefully nurtured, and many employers actively contribute to programme development at the college.
31. Support, care and guidance for learners are good across the college. A single 'student support and engagement' directorate with enthusiastic and creative staff ensures that resources are very effectively utilised, with extensive sharing of good practice and mutual support. Advice on careers and education, from enrolment to graduation, is good. Good use is made of external agencies to provide appropriate careers and welfare advice. Counselling provision is particularly effective.
32. Additional learning support is satisfactory. The support is carefully targeted at areas of need, or to individuals with carefully identified needs. For those who appropriately receive support after assessment, success rates are significantly higher than the college average. However, tutors and teachers make insufficient use of the college's electronic individual learning plans (e-ILPs) to manage learners' additional learning targets.
33. Academic support for learners is good. Learners welcome the easy communication with, and supportive approach of, their tutors. Tutors properly and routinely review progress with learners with, in many cases, a good degree of challenge. Potential underperformance is quickly identified and tutors ensure that learners take appropriate actions. Formal tutorials are well planned. Staff and learners are now using e-ILPs fairly well in all areas, and are developing their ability to set appropriate targets.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

34. The college has a strong vision for improvement and senior managers have set a very clear strategic direction. However, improvements have been slow because the priorities following merger have taken up much of the senior management team's resources. Although the merger with Salisbury College was managed very well, the emerging new Wiltshire College has undergone a period of extensive management restructure. Managers have devoted considerable time to rectifying the under-performance at the old Salisbury College. In addition, some weak financial reporting resulted in managers having to take rapid and rigorous action to stabilise the college's financial position. The college has tackled these financial difficulties particularly quickly and effectively. Despite these challenges, staff morale is particularly high. Excellent team working and a desire to provide the best possible experience for learners characterise the college staff.

35. Governors are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and highly committed. They are now carrying out much more rigorous financial monitoring. They provide a useful steer for the Principal and senior management team and have a broad and accurate view of the communities served by the college. However, the governors and college are still working towards a clear picture of how its campuses can best be marketed to their local communities.
36. Close working with external agencies, excellent communication and effective staff training have all helped to ensure that learners feel very safe. The college responds particularly well to both the staff's and the learners' concerns regarding welfare, and provides highly effective support. Both learners and staff have a very good awareness of health and safety aspects, which feature prominently in all areas of college life. Staff assess risk appropriately and monitor effectively all incidents on campus and at work placements. The college has a very strong approach to 'e-safety' and ensures that learners have the knowledge they need to stay safe when using the internet.
37. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Although the college collects data about outcomes for different groups, managers do not conduct sufficiently detailed analysis to discover whether gaps exist between the achievement of different ethnic, gender or other groups. The college uses its student enrichment programme particularly well to promote diversity and to broaden learners' knowledge and understanding of the wider aspects of equality and diversity. The culture in the college is one of mutual respect and staff and learners are well protected from bullying and harassment. However, teachers are not yet developing learners' understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity sufficiently well during lessons. The college has excellent plans to support teachers to use opportunities which arise during their lessons but, as yet, these have not been fully implemented.
38. Managers have recently strengthened the mechanisms for collecting feedback from learners, and these provide a good range of opportunities for learners to voice their views. The response to learners' feedback and the communication between learners and college staff are very good. The college values employers' views highly and puts great emphasis on ensuring that training meets their needs.
39. The college has appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating performance. It has done much work to improve the quality of its teaching and learning; it has greatly improved both the quality of the observations carried out and the mechanisms to support and develop teaching. Its self-assessment report is broadly accurate, although the college was too generous when making judgements about the outcomes of its learners overall. The self-assessment does not explore sufficiently the reasons for the low success rates at level 3 and does not examine whether the observations of teaching and learning highlight any differences between teaching at different course levels. However, the college has taken actions specifically to address the poor success rates at level 3.

40. At subject level, self-assessment is mostly accurate, but there are insufficient judgements about the specific qualities of teaching and learning and insufficient exploration of equality and diversity data. Action plans for improving aspects of the college's work-based learning are not all sufficiently clear. Managers regularly monitor quality improvement plans and carefully record progress. However the actions planned, particularly around improving success rates, are not always sufficiently well considered to bring about improvement.

41. The college has worked very hard to maximise the potential of its buildings. It has used its finances very well to improve teaching resources and develop innovative teaching areas. Some specialist resources are excellent. Staff have good access to professional development and financial management is now sound with good arrangements for financial accountability. The college has a sustainability scheme and uses its resources responsibly. Good progress has been made in reducing electricity and gas consumption and recycling rates are high. The college is strongly committed to ensuring that financial constraints do not impact on its learners' experience and it provides good value for money.

Subject areas

Health and social care, and childcare

Grade 3

Context

42. Some 430 learners, who are mainly aged 16 to 18, are taking full-time courses from entry level to advanced level on the Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge sites. The majority follow a health and social care pathway. A foundation degree in early childhood studies provides progression to higher education. Around 6% of learners are male and 9% are of Black minority ethnic heritage.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Retention has been a key challenge for the college, but college data indicate that almost all learners remain on programme in the current year. Historically, learners have made weak progress on advanced level courses relative to their starting points on entry to the programme.
- Learners develop effective personal and vocational skills, including communication, teamwork, problem solving, and research skills. However, the standard of learners' written work is satisfactory. Learners show a good understanding of the importance of valuing and respecting individuals. Progression is good to further study within the college, employment in care or childcare settings, and to higher education for nursing or teaching.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons provide a diverse range of learning activities. However, teachers' profiles setting out the needs of the group are insufficiently developed to inform lesson planning with sufficient precision to challenge and extend the more able learners.
- Teachers do not always use questioning in lessons sufficiently well to check and extend all learners' understanding. The guidance teachers provide for LSAs is too general to provide sufficiently tailored support for individuals within lessons.
- Teachers and learners make good use of ILT to enhance learning. For example, learners used laptop computers to research a range of factors informing a considered and mature debate on lone child asylum seekers. They demonstrated a good understanding of legislation and the role of different agencies to ensure the rights of children.
- The assessment of learners' work is accurate. Detailed assignment briefs provide relevant and engaging scenarios. Teachers provide constructive feedback which gives learners clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, not all learners provide a full bibliography or provide correct referencing of websites used and dates of access.
- A good range of additional qualifications and experiences enhances learners' employment prospects, developing knowledge and skill. All learners have a

range of work experience, including three days of supported placement for those at foundation level. Strong and productive links with industry support a wide range of placements, including a number of care and childcare settings and special schools.

- Care guidance and support are good. Initial advice and guidance ensure learners are on the appropriate programme. Early diagnostic testing identifies any potential personal, social or learning barriers. Support is appropriate and timely. Learners take responsibility for completing their e-ILPs, reflecting on their progress and setting learning targets. However, targets do not always challenge and extend individuals appropriately.
- Managers have been successful in revising the curriculum to meet learners' needs more precisely. Early indications point to much-improved retention and enhanced skills among learners. Robust quality assurance and effective communication ensure parity in the learners' experience across the sites and provide opportunities for sharing best practice. Well-qualified and vocationally experienced teachers are developing a culture of continuous improvement.
- Safeguarding and equality and diversity have an appropriate priority. All staff have undertaken appropriate training. The management of Criminal Records Bureau checks and risk assessments for placements is systematic. This meets learners' precise needs well, ensuring their safe inclusion and participation.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The report is evaluative with realistic areas for improvement. The self-assessment process is thorough and takes appropriate account of learners' views through stakeholder focus groups.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Provide more detailed group profiles to enable teachers to plan more fully and thus enable learners to fulfil their potential. Make more consistent use of directed questioning in lessons to enable teachers to check and develop all learners' understanding more fully.
- Provide further support to ensure the setting of more consistently realistic and challenging personal targets for learners. Spread existing good practice in teachers' encouragement of learners to set and monitor their own personal targets in lessons. Link these more fully to review in tutorials and the updating of e-ILPs.
- Provide more precise guidance to LSAs on how they should be supporting individual learners in each lesson.
- Ensure that learners provide correct referencing and bibliography on their written work.

Animal care and veterinary science

Grade 3

Context

43. At the time of the inspection there were 24 learners studying at intermediate level and 112 at advanced level. All learners are in full-time study; the majority are aged 16 to 18. Most learners studying animal-related subjects are female and a very small minority of learners are of minority ethnic heritage. There are no foundation level courses in animal care, but several animal care units are taught as part of foundation learning qualifications and provision for learners aged 14 to 16.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The success rate for the intermediate course is very high, but for the advanced course it has declined and was around the national average in 2010/11. Pass rates on both courses are high, but retention on the advanced level course was around the national average last year.
- Learners enjoy their learning and produce written work of a high standard. They develop a wide range of vocationally relevant practical skills and knowledge which contributes to their employability. However, the majority of learners at advanced level do not make the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment.
- Learners feel safe at the college. They value the safe and friendly campus. In lessons learners follow safe working practices and pay good attention to hygiene procedures when working with animals. Learners take part in a range of extra-curricular activities and contribute positively to the life of the college through participation in open days and organising dog shows.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical sessions, accounting for the minority of taught lessons, are good and enable learners to develop a wide range of practical skills appropriate to their individual career aspirations.
- However, many theory lessons are insufficiently challenging for higher achievers and do not meet the needs of individual learners sufficiently. In better lessons, teachers use a wide range of vocationally relevant examples and activities to meet learners' needs. The use of ILT to support learning is often good in lessons.
- Assessment practice is good. Teachers provide supportive and developmental feedback on assignments which helps learners to improve. Learners value the additional verbal feedback given with assignments. Learners benefit from a wide range of vocationally relevant assignment tasks. Teachers make good use of naturally occurring opportunities for practical assessment.
- The range of provision is satisfactory. There are no opportunities for part-time learners and for learners who wish to progress to follow shorter qualifications than the current two-year course at advanced level. Learners have the

opportunity to gain functional skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy where they do not have a GCSE grade C or above in English or mathematics.

- Partnerships with other organisations support teaching and learning well, for example through the provision of a wide range of useful work experience placements. An animal rescue charity has sited a re-homing centre at the college. A wide range of trips and visiting speakers enhance the on-site provision.
- Learners' support needs are identified early in the programme following initial assessment, helping to facilitate achievement for supported learners broadly in line with expectations. Tutorial support is good. Learners value their tutorial time as it helps them achieve. However, targets set in tutorials are often too general and do not focus sufficiently on ensuring achievement in line with predicted grades.
- Management of the curriculum is satisfactory. Managers promote high standards. There is good communication within the course team and with college support teams to identify and support learners at risk. However, managers do not use value added data sufficiently well to identify areas of weakness in learners' progress at advanced level and bring about improvement.
- Inspectors identified areas for improvement not captured in the self-assessment report. Managers' use of performance data to evaluate the quality of the provision and set appropriate actions for improvement is at an early stage of development. Targets for improving provision are not consistently clear or relevant, contributing to managers' difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of actions taken.
- Specialist equipment and resources are good. Learners make full use of the animal centre as well as the wider college estate. These resources enable learners to transfer theory into practice effectively. The range of species housed in the animal centre provides an appropriate breadth of experience.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Broaden the curriculum offer to meet the needs and expectations of learners more closely.
- Improve target setting at tutorials, and plan teaching and learning better, in order to meet the individual needs of learners more closely and ensure consistent achievement in line with challenging target grades.
- Make better use of performance data to ensure that self-assessment provides a more critical self-evaluation of the provision. Set more precise and more easily measurable targets for improvement.

Plumbing (work-based learning)

Grade 3

Context

44. Currently some 87 learners are following apprenticeship programmes. Of these, 50 are at advanced level with the remainder at intermediate level. The programmes are based at the college's Trowbridge and Salisbury centres.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. There has been a year-on-year improvement in both overall and within planned time scales. Success rates within planned time scales have improved significantly and are at the national average at intermediate level and well above the average at advanced level. Overall success rates, although improving, are still around the national average linked to issues around learners' retention.
- Learners make good progress. Many start on the college's full-time programmes with little experience of plumbing or practical skills. Significant numbers move through these courses onto the apprenticeship programmes when they are introduced to employers by the college. Most progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships and responsible positions with their employers. Learners greatly enjoy their learning.
- The focus on the development of safe working practices, both in the college and the workplace, is strong. Learners are clear on the risks and hazards in their workplaces and with the equipment they use. They make appropriate use of the correct personal protective equipment. Learners feel safe and have developed sufficient confidence to challenge unsafe practice.
- The standard of learners' work is frequently good. Learners work confidently and competently and with appropriate diligence, particularly in domestic properties. Photographs frequently provide evidence of the standard of learners' work, but use of other methods for this is limited.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan sessions well and make good use of profiles about learners' skills and learning needs to plan the wide range of activities. Teachers use question and answer techniques well, engaging learners and checking understanding thoroughly. They use innovative techniques frequently to demonstrate complex concepts. They employ well humour and real-life anecdotes to place learning in context.
- Assessment methods are satisfactory. The blend of assessment by direct observation and job records is appropriate. However, the standardisation of practices and compliance with awarding body minimum requirements do not allow learners to showcase their achievements sufficiently.

- Assessors do not identify and correct spelling and grammar errors routinely and systematically. Assessor feedback does not indicate how the work could be improved to allow learners to demonstrate their full potential.
- Records of progress on the commercial tracking system are thorough and contribute to monitoring of learners' progress through the progress reviews that are now particularly effective. Learners have a clear understanding of where they are on the programme and how much more is required. Employers also are equally clear on their learners' progress and the targets being set.
- The range of plumbing programmes, together with the availability of additional certification and updating units, meets the needs of learners and employers very well. Programmes to support professional updating and competence testing for apprentices and local employers ensure that local and national priorities are supported.
- College staff work closely with employers to ensure that they are informed fully of learners' progress and assessment requirements. All speak highly of the quality of the training and value added to their businesses from the high levels of skill the apprentices acquire.
- Learners receive effective vocational and pastoral guidance and support. Individual learning plans show the results of initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. In-class support assistants help the small number of learners at intermediate level in need of literacy support. Support from training coordinators and assessors in the workplace is good.
- Recent restructuring has clarified lines of communication, roles and responsibilities in leadership and management. Team working is very effective. Meetings focus more sharply on learners' performance. Staff make good use of data in identifying areas of under performance and targeting improvement. Managers have recognised and tackled under performance in teaching.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learning activities and progress reviews do not challenge or develop learners' understanding sufficiently to enable them to reflect on how they would adapt their customer service skills in interacting with different clients.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that advice, guidance and selection identify effectively those learners who may be at risk of leaving and need additional attention and support, in order to improve success rates further, especially for apprentices at intermediate level.
- Ensure that the assessment practices reflect more accurately learners' competence and allow them to demonstrate their full potential.
- Extend the range and scope of the promotion of equality and diversity, particularly in teaching and progress reviews, to develop further learners' knowledge, understanding and customer relationship skills.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 2

Context

45. At the time of the inspection there were 350 learners aged 16 to 18 and some 70 adult learners enrolled on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. In addition, around 70 learners aged 14 to 16, from a range of local schools, were attending foundation level courses on a part-time basis. Approximately 60 learners on apprenticeship programmes did not form part of the inspection. The proportion of male learners is below the sector norm.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners' success rates on most courses have improved in 2010/11 and are at, or above, the national average. Pass rates across all course levels are high. However, the picture of learners' progress across the provision has been inconsistent.
- Teachers set high commercial standards through their own practice. The standard of learners' work is good with learners working diligently in developing their practical skills in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. A high proportion of learners progress into employment.
- Learners demonstrate good awareness of their employment rights and responsibilities, which gives them confidence to address personal concerns. Learners feel safe at college. They work safely and teachers' reinforcement of safe working practices is effective.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their lessons and participate enthusiastically in an interesting range of activities. Evidence of learning was apparent in the high level of practical skills inspectors observed, such as in colour, styling and make-up.
- In better lessons teachers plan sessions well, using information from initial assessment to ensure that learners make appropriate progress. Teachers pace activities well to meet learners' needs and plan appropriate 'stretch and challenge' activities to extend learning for high achievers. Weaker lessons lack innovation in learning activities and teachers lack the confidence to use ILT to enhance learning.
- The planning and development of functional skills teaching and learning delivery are good and enhance learners' employability. Teachers monitor learners' progress closely. The impact of this provision on learners' performance is visible in the good standard of course work and practical skills in areas such as salon reception.
- Assessment practice is good. In most cases learners receive feedback which is helpful in promoting improvement in their performance. Most learners understand how to improve their work in relation to long-term and medium-term goals. However, for less able learners, goals are not broken down into manageable short-term targets which are meaningful to them.

- The range of courses meets learners' needs and interests successfully. Professional product knowledge, in areas such as skin care and hair extensions, is received well by learners. However, gaps in provision to enhance employability skills exist for those learners who require additional time before moving on to advanced levels, as does further skills training for more able learners at intermediate level.
- Leadership and management are good. Team work is strong and communication between hairdressing and beauty therapy staff is frequent and effective. The review of performance data and the use of self-assessment to improve the provision are rigorous.
- The safeguarding of learners is good. Managers and staff monitor and update regularly safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff receive suitable training and are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities for learners' safety. Staff work effectively with employers to ensure that safeguarding and the protection of learners away from college are a high priority.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners' awareness of characteristics of diversity, necessary to help them improve their customer service skills and inform their professional practice, is insufficiently developed. Initiatives to improve the recruitment of male learners have not been fully effective.
- Value for money is good. Facilities at Trowbridge meet current commercial standards and learners have a very positive experience of developing realistic employment standards. However, salon facilities at Chippenham do not match these high standards.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that targets discussed with learners at reviews are broken down into short-term targets that enable all learners to make appropriate progress in measurable stages.
- Extend the curriculum offer to enhance learners' progression and employability skills.
- Develop awareness of equality and diversity effectively within practical hairdressing sessions so that learners are able to transfer theory to practice and enhance their customer service skills.
- Develop opportunities to improve the recruitment of male learners into hairdressing and beauty therapy courses.

Visual arts, and media

Grade 2

Context

46. Some 330 full-time learners are on programmes in art and design, television and film studies, media studies, games design, and photography. Most learners are aged 16 to 18, and two thirds are female. The scope of provision allows learners to progress from foundation level in art, design and media through to higher education by means of a variety of specialist pathways.

Key findings

- Current outcomes for learners are good overall, although in the previous two years outcomes for many learners have been satisfactory. Success rates improved in 2010/11, but present a mixed picture across the range of the provision. College data indicate that it is tackling successfully its key area for improvement around retaining learners to the end of their courses. Retention of current learners is high.
- Learners in recent years have made satisfactory progress compared to their prior attainment on entry to their studies, but current learners are making good progress in their learning. Progression is good. Many learners go on to study at prestigious universities and art schools.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners work well together and enjoy their studies. They make interesting and professional films and acquire very good drawing skills. They produce ambitious sketchbooks, photographs and storyboards of a high standard.
- Learners feel safe in college, work safely and observe safe working practices. They have high aspirations and develop good social skills. Their attendance is good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers take a student-centred approach and are enthusiastic and committed to helping learners achieve. The most successful lessons show an imaginative approach, challenge learners to improve their skills and knowledge and promote learners' independent learning well.
- In a minority of less successful lessons, teachers do not provide extension activities for the most able learners if they complete work quickly or require greater challenge. The teacher-led style does not fully encourage independent learning in these lessons. Learners listen passively to long periods of exposition. Teachers do not check learning sufficiently.
- The assessment of learners' work is good and helps learners to develop their skills and standards of work. Marking standards are rigorous and internal verification is thorough and well managed. Teachers provide clear written guidance against the performance criteria which helps learners to improve.
- Learners appreciate teachers' accessibility and extensive industry experience. Teaching and support staff give their time generously outside timetabled hours,

providing lunchtime sessions on portfolio preparation and keeping studios open outside formal lesson times.

- Enrichment and partnership activities with partner organisations are good. Learners benefit from annual study trips abroad and a constant programme of educational visits. Learners are enabled to visit a range of higher education providers before making their choices for higher education.
- Leadership and management are good. Strategies to improve the curriculum and share good practice are beginning to have an impact. Communication between teachers and managers is good. The self-assessment report is accurate, but the analysis of learners' progress and learners' views of the provision is insufficient. Opportunities for continuing professional development are good.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in art and design and media is satisfactory. Learners with significant physical, sensory and learning difficulties achieve well on all programmes. However, on a minority of courses, opportunities are missed to expose learners to a range of influences from a variety of cultures.
- Resources are good. The college has managed its financial resources well to provide outstanding facilities for television and film studies at the Chippenham campus. Resources and accommodation at the Trowbridge and Salisbury campuses are good.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the current sharp focus on improving retention and success rates by sharing existing good practice in teaching and learning more fully.
- Develop further the current high levels of expertise among teachers, by supporting regular specialist update training in new software and techniques, and encouraging teachers to visit a range of outstanding colleges.
- Plan more consistently opportunities to expose learners to a range of cultural influences to inform their work.
- Help all learners achieve their full potential by including more extension activities, both in lessons and through homework assignments.

Business and administration (work-based learning)

Grade 3

Context

47. Currently 205 learners are on work-based learning courses in accounting, administration, sales and marketing, and business management. Around two thirds are female. There are 181 apprentices of whom 33 are aged 16 to 18. Two thirds are on intermediate level apprenticeships. Programmes for 110 learners are delivered by partners. Just over 20 learners are on 'NVQs in the workplace' programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. In 2009/10 learners' overall success in intermediate apprenticeships was broadly average, but in 2010/11 there was a sharp decline in success rates to significantly below national average with very low success in some subcontracted provision. Advanced apprenticeships and Train to Gain show improved success rates at or above the national average, although at level 3 Train to Gain success was rarely achieved within planned timescales.
- Standards of skills development and learners' progress are good. Learners are using their skills to make an effective contribution in the workplace, including measurable improvements in profit margins and business processes.
- Learners' progression is good with most apprentices moving to higher levels and more responsible positions with employers. Teachers match training effectively to job requirements and set targets clearly with learners. As a result, apprentices gain relevant skills rapidly and make steady progress appropriate to their aims and abilities.
- Learners demonstrate safe practice in the workplace. During assessments and reviews learners are able to describe effectively health and safety arrangements in their places of employment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Very well planned skills workshops provide individualised learning. Staff use assessment and collaborative target-setting meetings with learners very effectively to support their progress. Learners find these activities highly motivational. However, some sessions focus too heavily on completing the required competences, limiting learners' opportunities to display their full potential through additional activities.
- Employers are well informed of what learners have to cover and are involved in assessment and review of learners' progress. Programmes meet the needs of apprentices and employers very precisely. Staff negotiate the choice of units with learners and employers and progression is tailored to individual learners' needs.

- Frequent and consistent support from staff has enabled learners to grow significantly in confidence in their studies and their workplace performance. Apprentices and employers value the timely advice, guidance and support provided. This has been effective in supporting learners' progression to advanced and higher apprenticeships.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers' monitoring of the quality of subcontractors' work has been poor and this has delayed interventions to improve outcomes for learners. New, thorough arrangements are in place but it is too early to judge their impact on outcomes.
- Leaders and managers promote ambition for growth and success and are improving the provision. Provision is relevant to local and regional skills needs. College provision has developed good links with employers for recruitment and progression of apprentices and these have led to longer-term relationships which benefit learners.
- The overall self-assessment report for work-based learning is broadly accurate with an appropriate action plan at high level. However, the lack of a specific self-assessment report or action plan for business and administration apprentices has limited the focus on improvement. The availability and use of data at subject and qualification levels to identify and narrow gaps in achievements by particular groups are under developed.
- The college collects the views of apprentices and employers for the provision overall. Following focus groups and feedback from individuals, the college has made some adjustments to provision. Individual negotiation over learning targets and delivery methods, including the option for distance learning which benefits those in rural areas, is valued by learners and employers.

What does Wiltshire College need to do to improve further?

- Provide enhanced learning opportunities beyond the basic qualification requirements to develop the full potential of apprentices.
- Monitor closely the quality of the learners' experience in subcontracted provision, using new quality assurance systems, and further share college good practice to improve outcomes for learners.
- Make better use of data regarding participation and performance at qualification level to enable analysis and action planning to narrow gaps in achievement by particular groups.
- Focus the self-assessment process more specifically on the provision for business and administration in work-based learning. Develop a sharply focused action plan that provides a sound basis for improvement.

Information about the inspection

48. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal for curriculum and quality, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also 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.
49. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Wiltshire 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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	3,788	72	3,177	539	0
Part-time learners	3,670	384	288	1,342	1,656
Overall effectiveness	3	2	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3	2	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
Quality of provision	2				
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?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	3				
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
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?	3				
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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