

Macclesfield College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130621

Name of lead inspector: Vivien Shipley HMI

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Information about the provider

1. Macclesfield College is a medium-sized general further education college located in East Cheshire. In the area the college serves there are eight 11 to 18 secondary schools and an independent school, providing learners with a wide choice of post-16 provision. The surrounding area is relatively affluent and mostly rural. Most learners come from North East Cheshire with small numbers travelling from the surrounding areas of Derbyshire and Stockport. Although the proportion of pupils from East Cheshire schools attaining five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and mathematics is above the national average, the numbers enrolling at the college with these qualifications is small.
2. The college is located in a 'Learning Zone' campus alongside an 11 to 16 academy that it sponsors, and a special school. The college offers provision from entry to advanced level in 12 subject areas. In 2010/11 there were 5,775 enrolments on college-based courses and 367 enrolments on work-based programmes, including 142 apprentices. The provision for employers has grown significantly over the last three years and the college also has a contract from East Cheshire Council for part-time courses for adults. The college also offers courses for 14 to 16 year olds in partnership with local schools. It is an associate college of Manchester Metropolitan University and in 2010/11 there were 250 learners on higher-education programmes.
3. The mission of the college is; 'With our partners in the Macclesfield Learning Zone (LZ6), Macclesfield College and LZ6 will raise aspirations and provide the outstanding, responsive service needed to ensure young people achieve their potential and that the workforce is suitably skilled and community life enriched'.
4. At the time of the inspection the college governors were in the process of appointing a new Principal and a middle management restructure was taking place.
5. The inspection took account of all of the provision offered by the college that is funded by the Skills Funding Agency. Provision in engineering and manufacturing, information and communication technology (ICT), hairdressing and beauty therapy, and arts, media and publishing, was inspected in depth.
6. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Total People (technical certificates)
 - Cheshire East Local Authority (part-time adult learning)

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11 |
|---|--|
| Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Further education (16 to 18) Foundation learning | 207 part-time learners 1,129 full-time learners 63 full-time learners 59 part-time learners |
| Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+) | 299 full-time 1,551 part-time learners |
| Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships | 225 learners 142 apprentices |
| Adult and community learning | 1,769 learners |

Summary report

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

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 4 |
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| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Capacity to improve | Grade 4 |
|----------------------------|----------------|

| | Grade |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Outcomes for learners | 3 |
| Quality of provision | 3 |
| Leadership and management | 4 |
| Safeguarding | 4 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |

| Subject Areas | Grade |
|--|--------------|
| Engineering and manufacturing | 3 |
| Information and communication technology | 3 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | 3 |
| Arts, media and publishing | 4 |

Overall effectiveness

7. This college is inadequate. Although a high proportion of adults are successful in achieving qualifications, too many learners aged 16 to 18, particularly those on advanced-level courses, leave college early and the proportion that successfully complete their learning programme is unsatisfactory. Learners who stay until the end of their course enjoy college and develop the skills they need to give them a good chance of securing employment or to progress to higher education. Although most learners treat each other with respect, managers do not always deal with incidents of poor behaviour swiftly. Inspectors judged that learners were developing the skills that would help them to pass their qualifications but too many were absent from their lessons.
8. Quality assurance procedures have not been effective in maintaining the standards seen at the last inspection when the college was judged to be outstanding. The college's self-assessment of the quality of the experience

provided for learners is not an accurate appraisal of its performance. As a consequence, teachers and other staff have not had a clear understanding of what they needed to do to improve. Leaders' and managers' expectations of what learners should achieve have not been sufficiently high. Improved access to reliable management information and better arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to provide managers with a more accurate understanding of the areas that need to be addressed to move the college forward rapidly.

Main findings

- Although success rates have improved gradually over the last four years and are now just below the national average, rates of improvement vary significantly for learners of different ages, and across and within subject areas. For adults, success rates improved significantly in 2011, and are high. For learners aged 16 to 18 the rates declined significantly and are unsatisfactory. Success rates for work-based learners are high.
- Most learners who are retained on their courses enjoy college and make satisfactory progress. Adult learners and those on work-based courses make good progress. Learners aged 16 to 18 make satisfactory progress. Learners' attendance at lessons during inspection was low. Most learners informed inspectors that they feel safe at college. A small minority felt that incidents of bullying and harassment are not tackled swiftly.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. However, the quality of the learning experience varies significantly across the college and within subject areas. The better lessons are well planned. In weaker lessons, the aims and objectives are not clear and learning activities are not matched appropriately to the varying needs of the learners. Assessment practice is mostly effective, particularly in work-based learning.
- Partnerships are good. Employers speak highly about the college's flexibility in developing apprenticeships and bespoke provision that meet the needs of their employees very well. Established school links support learners' transition to college. College managers provide leadership of local initiatives that increase participation in further education. A satisfactory range of provision is provided for college-based learners.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Some learners do not receive the advice they need to help them make the right choice of course. Learners informed inspectors that their access to individual tutorial reviews varies; some planned reviews do not take place and others are infrequent. Learners who need additional support are identified and supported quickly.
- Leadership and management, governance, and the college's capacity to improve are inadequate. The quality of the provision has declined significantly since the previous inspection. Expectations of staff and learners have not been high enough. Leaders have not placed sufficient priority on improving teaching and

learning until recently. However, significant growth in provision for employers has been managed well.

- Since the appointment of the new deputy Principal, long-standing weaknesses in key business processes, including those for the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, management information and human resource management, are now being reviewed. Arrangements to assure and improve the quality of teaching and learning have been strengthened, but more needs to be done to ensure that teachers focus on learners' needs and their progress.
- Arrangements to ensure that learners are safeguarded are inadequate. Policies and procedures are appropriate, but are not implemented rigorously. Appropriate vetting checks are carried out on most staff and staff receive sufficient training. Actions taken to respond to serious safeguarding issues are effective. Managers' monitoring and reporting of incidents of bullying and harassment are unsatisfactory. Action planning to improve safeguarding is weak.
- Arrangements for self-assessment and quality assurance have not been effective in improving the quality of the experience for learners. The grades awarded and judgements made through self-assessment are not supported by robust analysis of performance against challenging targets. Lack of rigour in the validation of the content of the self-assessment report has resulted in the college significantly over grading all aspects of the provision.

What does Macclesfield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 by developing and implementing a retention improvement strategy that builds upon the effective practice on provision for adults. At the same time, take action to maintain high pass rates.
- Improve teaching and learning by supporting teachers in developing clear aims and objectives for their lessons. Ensure that these are used to plan appropriate learning activities and assessment methods. Improve teachers' use of questioning techniques to challenge learners of all abilities and to monitor their progress.
- Take action to ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are implemented robustly. Provide governors with the information they need to monitor the implementation of safeguarding policies. Take action to ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Improve arrangements for quality assurance and self-assessment through the robust analysis and evaluation of accurate management information and other sources of evidence. Ensure that the validation and moderation of the outcomes from all stages of self-assessment is rigorous.
- Improve the arrangements for performance management so that staff at all levels in the college, are held to account for their performance. Ensure that all

members of staff have a clear and accurate understanding of what they need to do to improve the experience for learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the support they receive from friendly and encouraging teachers and tutors
- when teachers link their lessons to employment and other relevant activities
- the realistic working environments in the restaurant, engineering workshops and in sport and fitness
- the good response to their complaints about the need for more furniture in the refectory
- the opportunity to learn in an adult atmosphere
- that staff support them with their personal issues
- the opportunity to make new friends.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the problems with slow computers, printers that do not work and difficulties with the network
- the poor attendance and punctuality of some learners that disrupt lessons
- the length of some lessons without sufficient variety of learning activities
- the variable access to personal tutors
- the poor advice and guidance about course choices
- that their identity badges are not checked routinely and rigorously
- the poor learning resources in areas such as fine art, hairdressing and in some classrooms.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the very good communications and working relationships
- that the provision meets their expectations
- lively lessons that their employees enjoy
- that the college provides learners with a second chance to gain qualifications
- the flexible response to meeting their needs.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the pace of some courses – they are sometimes rushed.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

9. Senior managers and governors have not taken effective action to maintain the strengths seen at the last inspection and they have not resolved all of the areas for improvement. At the previous inspection the college was judged to be outstanding; it is now inadequate. Managers have not set sufficiently high expectations for staff. They have not rigorously monitored learners' outcomes against challenging targets and, as a consequence, managers and other staff do not have a realistic view of the college's performance to inform robust improvement plans. Arrangements for performance management have not been effective in holding staff to account. Recent re-organisation of the roles and responsibilities of senior managers has secured cost savings that are being invested in improving the experience for learners.
10. Arrangements for quality assurance and self-assessment have not been effective in improving standards. Until recently the college has not placed sufficient priority on improving teaching and learning and in resolving weaknesses in the management of data. Inspectors disagreed with every grade awarded through the college's self-assessment process. Although arrangements for more stringent monitoring and review of performance have been introduced recently, it is too early to measure their impact on learners' outcomes.
11. Governors have monitored the college's finances and estate developments effectively but they have not provided sufficient monitoring and challenge to secure improvements to the experience for learners. Strong financial management, well qualified staff, the location of the learning accommodation and the mostly very good facilities are significant assets for the future.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

12. The overall success rate has improved gradually over the last three years to just below this year's national average for similar colleges. On long and short courses the rates have also improved slowly to around the national averages. Improvements in the overall rates mask significant differences in outcomes for learners aged 16 to 18 to those for adults. In 2011, success rates for adults improved significantly; for learners aged 16 to 18 the rates declined at all levels.
13. Success rates for adults on long courses are high. At entry and foundation levels, success rates improved significantly in 2011 and are very high. At intermediate and advanced levels, from a broadly satisfactory position in previous years, success rates improved significantly in 2011, and are now high.
14. Success rates on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 have not improved over the last four years and are unsatisfactory. At foundation and intermediate levels, the rates have been broadly satisfactory for the last four years. However,

- at advanced level, success rates have declined over the same period and are now very low. For the small number of entry-level learners, success rates have also declined and are low.
15. Success rates on provision for employers are high. On apprenticeships success rates are high; on NVQs in the workplace they are satisfactory. Learners aged 14 to 16 enjoy their time at college and their attainment is high.
 16. Too many learners leave college early without completing their programmes. This year, as a result of increased monitoring, fewer learners on courses lasting one year have left early; however, on two-year courses the number leaving early has increased further. Pass rates have improved slowly and are high. Attendance at lessons observed by inspectors was low.
 17. Success rates vary significantly across subject areas and courses. In three subject areas the rates are above national averages. Three areas are broadly in line with national averages, but in six areas the rates have declined to below the national averages. At course level, success rates have been consistently high in accounting, and on first and national Diplomas in ICT. However, in other areas success rates are declining and low. This includes advanced level courses in childcare, sport, and travel and tourism. In 2011, success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 declined significantly as a result of poor performance on the higher and advanced Diplomas. In science and mathematics, a high proportion of learners achieve a grade A* to C. In English, the proportion of learners achieving a grade A* to C is satisfactory.
 18. Learners who are retained on their courses enjoy college and make satisfactory progress. Adult learners make good progress. Learners aged 16 to 18 who complete their programmes make satisfactory progress. The progress learners make varies across subject areas and courses. In one of the areas inspected learners were making good progress, in two areas progress was satisfactory and in the other area learners were making insufficient progress. Work-based learners make good progress. Learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. Those in receipt of additional learning support do not always achieve as well as other learners. Overall, the proportion of learners achieving a high grade at the end of their course is satisfactory.
 19. Low functional skills success rates impact adversely on the progress of learners aged 16 to 18, particularly those on Diploma courses. Learners on Skills for Life courses make good progress. Learners achieve well on advanced level key skills courses that promote their personal and social development.
 20. Actions to promote learners' economic and social well-being are satisfactory. In some subject areas visiting speakers and well planned visits enhance learners' understanding of the skills they need to acquire to secure employment. Apprentices benefit significantly from their excellent employment experience.

21. Learners benefit from being able to work and socialise in welcoming and well maintained buildings. Teachers in vocational areas, such as engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy, ensure that learners wear appropriate clothing, but in other lessons, such as art and design, some learners wear inappropriate outdoor clothing. Learners develop a good understanding of health and safety in areas such as engineering; however, this is not the case on hairdressing courses. Although most learners feel safe at college, a small minority felt that incidents of bullying and harassment are not resolved quickly. Learners informed inspectors that the arrangements for checking their identity are not always adhered to rigorously by staff.
22. The college provides a satisfactory range of activities to help learners to make informed choices about their health and well-being. Themed tutorial weeks are used to provide learners with advice on sexual health, smoking cessation and substance misuse. Healthy food options are promoted satisfactorily. Some learners have the opportunity to contribute to the college as, for example, student ambassadors. However, as the ambassadors and student governors are not elected by their peers, other learners are not aware of these roles and how they can contribute to decision-making processes. Some learners are actively involved in community activities but this good practice is not extended to all.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

23. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory, the quality of the experience for learners varies significantly across the college and within subject areas. In the better sessions, teachers plan carefully and manage their lessons very well, sharing the aims and objectives with the learners at the beginning of the session. They ensure that the learning objectives are achieved through using well planned activities that engage and challenge all learners. They check learners' understanding regularly through effective questioning and short assessment tasks. In these lessons, learners of all abilities make good progress. In less effective lessons, teachers' planning does not meet the differing needs of all learners in the group: the aims of the lesson are unclear; the pace of the session is too slow; and questioning is not used effectively to probe and challenge learners' understanding. Teachers dominate weaker lessons; they talk for too long, limiting learners' contributions and their involvement in challenging and interesting activities.
24. Information and communication technology is used to extend and develop learning in some lessons. The slow speed of connection and problems with computers and printers inhibit learning both within formal lessons and open-learning areas. The college's learning resource centre is used effectively by learners but the virtual learning environment is under-utilised.
25. The college has effective systems in place to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills, and to identify those with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Once additional learning needs are identified support is quickly put in place. Managers do not systematically analyse and report on the impact

additional learning support has on learners' attainment. Teachers make insufficient use of the outcomes of initial assessment of learners' levels of literacy and numeracy in planning learning activities.

26. Assessment practices are mostly effective. Most learners are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Assessment feedback is usually constructive and supportive. However, in a minority of cases, written feedback on learners' work does not provide sufficient detail on the areas for improvement and spelling errors are not highlighted. Assessment strategies in work-based provision are very well planned and help learners to complete their qualifications within the planned time. Work-based learning assessors make very effective use of e-portfolios to monitor learners' progress.
27. Until recently managers placed insufficient priority on improving teaching and learning. Arrangements for observing teaching and learning have been strengthened this year to help to resolve over generous grading. Observations are now unannounced, and the outcomes are linked better to performance management reviews and staff-development programmes. Managers have also introduced strategies, such as learning walks and peer observations, to provide a broader range of evidence on the quality of the learning experience. Although the new arrangements are more effective, some grades awarded continue to be over-generous and observers place too much emphasis on teaching, without measuring the progress learners are making and the standards of their work.
28. The range of provision meets the needs of learners and the wider community satisfactorily. In most subject areas, the courses offered provide learners with progression pathways within the college and routes into employment and higher education. However, the decision to replace first and national Diplomas with the higher and advanced Diplomas has not met the learning needs or career aspirations of a significant number of learners. Too many learners aged 16 to 18 on advanced level provision leave college early, or start again on another programme as a consequence of courses not meeting their expectations and ambitions. A satisfactory range of enrichment activities is offered including charitable and community activities. However, too few learners participate. Learners on sports programmes engage in a good range of activities but others make insufficient use of the college's very good facilities.
29. Managers have developed strong partnerships with schools and community groups that have extended the provision. College staff often provide leadership of key local initiatives that have raised the profile of vocational training and have increased participation in further education. Very effective links with employers have increased the range of apprenticeship programmes and bespoke courses that meet the needs of their employees very well.
30. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Although initial advice, guidance and induction help most learners to settle quickly into college, a significant number, particularly those on advanced level provision, do not receive the guidance they need to understand fully the content and demands of

the courses available. As a consequence learners on, for example, sport, and creative and media Diplomas, have been placed inappropriately on courses that did not meet their ambitions. Although there is evidence of learners progressing to different levels within the college and then to higher education and employment, the college does not systematically analyse progression to inform curriculum planning.

31. Managers have introduced new arrangements for tutorial support this year. These provide learners with one-to-one reviews from specialist personal tutors and themed weeks that contain group activities designed to support their progress. Learners' access to reviews is inconsistent and for some, the meetings are infrequent. Although personal tutors monitor learners' attendance, too many learners were absent during the inspection.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

32. Senior leaders and governors have established an appropriate strategic vision for the college that is focused on developing provision that responds to national and local priorities. They have collaborated well with partners to achieve this aim through the development of a campus that includes: the college's accommodation; an 11 to 16 academy that the college sponsors; a school for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and a community leisure facility. However, they have not been successful in improving learners' outcomes.
33. The quality of the experience for college-based learners has declined significantly since the last inspection. Leaders have not set high expectations for staff and learners. Until recently, insufficient priority has been placed on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Significant growth in apprenticeship provision has been achieved with good outcomes for learners. However, the introduction of the Diploma for college-based learners, a key college curriculum strategy, has not been managed well and has impacted adversely on the success rates of learners aged 16 to 18. Arrangements for performance management have not been sufficiently effective in holding staff, at all levels of the organisation, to account.
34. Since the appointment of a new deputy principal, longstanding weaknesses in key business systems, including those for the ICT infrastructure, management information and human resource management, are beginning to be resolved. The roles and responsibilities of senior managers have been reorganised successfully. This restructure has resulted in cost savings which are being invested in improving the quality of curriculum management.
35. Governors have used their wide range of skills and experience to monitor the college's finances and accommodation developments efficiently. However, senior managers have not provided them with the information needed on the college's performance to robustly validate the judgements made through self-

assessment. Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.

36. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are appropriate, but are not implemented rigorously. Appropriate criminal record checks, which are carried out on almost all staff and governors, are refreshed every three years and are recorded on the college's single central record. At the time of the inspection, the college was in the process of recording staff identity checks and teachers' qualifications on the register. The college has not established systematic arrangements for vetting the very small number of staff it does not employ directly. Senior managers, governors, designated safeguarding and other staff are trained appropriately. Managers have recently established efficient methods for recording staff training on the central register. Designated staff work effectively with external agencies to report and respond to serious safeguarding issues. However, the action they take in response to incidents of bullying and harassment is inadequate. Record keeping of such incidents is poor at all levels of the college and, as a consequence, senior managers are not able to analyse, evaluate and report to governors. Action planning to continue to develop safeguarding procedures is weak. Risk assessments of individual learners are not managed well.
37. The Principal chairs an active committee which oversees the implementation of the college's policies and procedures for the promotion of equality and diversity. Action planning is good at whole-college level. Targets are precise, milestones are measurable and progress is monitored closely. Data are analysed to identify gaps in achievement between different groups and these are addressed in the action plan. However, they are not carried through into improvement targets in all curriculum areas. Managers have not analysed incidents of bullying and harassment to inform the curriculum to develop learners' respect, understanding and tolerance of each other. An audit assessing the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is informing staff training, which is taking place in March. Good practice identified during the audit is being shared to help all teachers to improve their practice. Impact assessments, carried out recently, have identified the need to update a number of policies and managers have started to review and revise these documents in priority order. Excellent collaboration with schools is used to promote equality and diversity across partners. For example, a joint equality and diversity policy is implemented by partners through carefully outlined operating statements.
38. Arrangements for learners, employers and other key stakeholders to contribute to decision-making processes are satisfactory. Managers have established strong links with employers that are used to support the development of new courses for work-based learners. Employers speak highly about the college's response to their needs. Learners are able to comment about the services the college provides for them through regular surveys. Curriculum managers take action to respond where learners are dissatisfied. Student ambassadors represent other learners by passing on their views to managers and they represent the college at promotional events. Student governors attend meetings

of the corporation, but they, and the student ambassadors, are not elected by their peers. Many learners do not know who their representatives are and how to communicate with them.

39. The college's self-assessment and quality assurance processes have failed to secure consistent improvements in outcomes for learners. Longstanding weaknesses in the management of data have not been addressed until recently and, as a consequence, whole college self-assessment is not based on the robust analysis of the college's performance against challenging benchmarks. Arrangements for validating the judgements made through self-assessment lack rigour. The grades awarded and judgements made are not supported by the evidence presented and are often highly inflated. Managers recently commissioned an independent review of the provision and this is providing a more accurate analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement. Arrangements for observing and improving the quality of teaching and learning have improved this year.
40. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Financial management and control are good. Staff are well qualified. Accommodation and learning resources are mostly very good. However, problems with the ICT infrastructure inhibit students' learning and progress both in lessons and open learning areas.

Subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing

Grade 3

Context

41. The college offers courses from foundation to advanced level in engineering, aeronautical and electrical engineering. Apprenticeships in engineering and electro technical, and higher education courses are also offered. Currently there are 228 learners enrolled, including six apprentices. Most are aged 16 to 18 and are male.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are low. For adults they are satisfactory. For the small number of learners at foundation level success rates are very high. At intermediate and advanced level success rates are broadly satisfactory. Success rates on the Diploma and on functional skills are low. Apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory. The proportion of learners who leave early has reduced this year.
- Learners enjoy college and those who complete their programmes make satisfactory progress based upon their prior qualifications. They develop good practical skills and are successful in attaining additional qualifications that help them to progress. Their behaviour is good and they learn to treat each other with respect. However, learners' attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was low.
- Learners feel safe at college. Teachers place a high priority on health and safety in lessons. They ensure that learners wear the correct personal protective clothing and that they have a good understanding of how to work safely during practical sessions. Learners develop a good awareness of risk-assessment procedures and this prepares them well for employment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Better practical lessons are characterised by effective planning with teachers making very good use of the industry standard equipment available to link learning to employment. In these sessions, learners make good progress. They understand the purpose of the activities they are undertaking as the teacher explains the learning outcomes carefully and they enjoy the employment-related activities.
- Although assessment is satisfactory learners do not always receive the feedback they need during lessons to challenge and motivate them to make the progress they should. Written feedback on learners' work is focused on the demands of the qualification and does not always provide them with sufficient information on the skills they need to develop.
- Learners complete an initial assessment of their levels of literacy and numeracy that most teachers use effectively to plan a suitable range of learning activities. The outcomes of the assessments are used to identify those learners who need

additional help. Learners informed inspectors that they value the extra help they receive to improve their levels of literacy and numeracy.

- Learners benefit from being able to choose from a good range of specialist courses. However, they do not always receive the information needed to help them make the right choice. In previous years, too many learners have left early without achieving their qualifications. Strategies to identify and support learners at risk of underperforming are not sufficiently effective. Learners receive good advice about progression to employment and higher education.
- Managers have developed good partnerships with employers. Employers support the college in recruiting learners with the right skills and they provide opportunities for future employment. Learners benefit from the enhanced learning resources and equipment that employers provide. Working closely with employers the college provides courses that meet their needs. Employers speak highly of their excellent relationships with the college.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college's self-assessment of the provision identified most of the strengths and areas for improvement. However, the action plan does not set out clearly how improvements will be carried out and how progress will be monitored. Arrangements for moderating the judgements made through self-assessment are not robust and, as a consequence, staff have an over-generous view of the quality of the provision.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well. Managers have analysed the performance of different groups of learners but they have not taken sufficient account of the underperformance of White British males in improvement planning. Teachers and other staff have a good understanding of health and safety and they use this knowledge well to plan appropriate learning activities.
- Teachers use the very good practical resources and equipment available to motivate and inspire learners to develop industry standard skills. Teachers and other staff are well qualified and they utilise their industrial experience to help to ensure that learners' employment prospects are maximised.

What does Macclesfield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for learners aged 16 to 18 by ensuring that they receive the advice and guidance they need to select the right course.
- Improve assessment so that all learners receive regular feedback about the skills they need to develop to achieve their ambitions. Provide learners with detailed information on their progress against their targets.
- Improve the accuracy and rigour of self-assessment. Ensure that action plans address all of the areas for improvement and that strengths are maintained. Monitor progress against actions for improvement regularly. Implement robust arrangements for moderating the outcomes from self-assessment.

Information and communication technology

Grade 3

Context

42. The college offers full- and part-time courses from entry to advanced level. Courses for ICT users and practitioners are offered. This academic year the college is offering A and AS level courses in applied information and communication technology. At the time of the inspection 329 learners were enrolled; 147 are aged 16 to 18 and 182 are adults.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates on full-time courses for learners aged 16 to 18 are very high. On part-time courses for adults they are high overall. However, on two short courses at entry and intermediate level success rates are declining and low.
- Learners make satisfactory progress. On national Diploma courses learners make satisfactory progress in comparison to their prior qualifications. On intermediate level courses the proportion of learners achieving high grades is satisfactory. However, the overall proportion of learners achieving high grades is low. Learners' attendance and punctuality at lessons observed during the inspection were poor.
- Learners informed inspectors that they feel safe at college. On work-based provision high priority is placed on ensuring that learners develop good health and safety awareness. Teachers promote health and safety appropriately in lessons. Learners demonstrate appropriate behaviour when using computers.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory overall. However, the quality of lessons is inconsistent and not enough are of the highest quality. In the better lessons, teachers use a variety of well structured activities to ensure that learners produce good standards of work. The activities stretch and challenge all learners so those that achieve quickly are encouraged to progress further.
- The pace of most lessons is not brisk enough to keep all learners on task. Teachers' use of questioning is not sufficiently directed to challenge all learners. Learners attending workshop sessions are not provided with precise short-term targets and this inhibits their progress. Learning is often adversely affected by problems with computers and the fixed layout of some rooms.
- On work-based courses, the recording and monitoring of learners' progress is effective in helping them to achieve the qualification within the allotted time. On full-time courses, learners' progress against their target grades is monitored systematically. Submitted work is returned quickly by staff with detailed written feedback. The feedback gives learners guidance on what they need to do to improve and supports them with encouragement and praise.
- The college offers an appropriate range of courses that provides opportunities for learners to progress from entry to advanced level. Adults are able to attend at times that meet their individual needs. Learners and employers appreciate

highly the college's flexibility. Work-based learners benefit from very good links between the college and their employers which help to ensure that the curriculum is relevant to their work roles.

- Care, guidance and support are good. Personal tutors challenge and support learners to make the required progress. Learners on full-time courses have regular review meetings with their personal tutor who monitors their attendance, effort and progress. Action points and targets are agreed with learners and progress against these is monitored during review meetings. However, some targets are not specific enough to enable progress to be monitored accurately.
- Learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and they receive good support, including the provision of appropriate specialist equipment and software. For example, specialist keyboard and speech software allows learners with visual impairments to progress through their qualifications at the same rate as their peers.
- Managers have taken effective action to maintain high success rates. The quality of the provision is self-assessed on a regular basis and progress against action plan targets is monitored formally. However, some of the strengths identified are overstated and not all areas for improvement are recorded. The quality improvement plan is very limited; some targets are not sufficiently specific or ambitious. Arrangements to moderate the judgements made through self-assessment lack rigour.
- Regular team meetings are focused on identifying and taking action to support learners at risk of underperforming. However, these meetings are not being used effectively to review and share best practice in teaching and learning. Computer hardware in many classrooms is not adequate for the software in use on full-time courses.
- Actions to promote equality of opportunity are satisfactory. For example, actions to increase the proportion of female learners have been successful. Course teams do not use success rate data to analyse systematically the performance of different groups of learners. As a consequence, gaps in achievement have not been identified.

What does Macclesfield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all learners, particularly those attending workshops, have stretching targets against which their progress is monitored regularly.
- Identify and share best practice in teachers' use of questioning techniques to ensure that learners make better progress.
- Review and improve the suitability of the computer equipment and the layout of the rooms used for timetabled classes.
- Increase the focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through the sharing of best practice in team meetings and through accurate self-

assessment. Improve action planning so that all of the key areas for improvement in the provision are identified and followed up.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 3

Context

43. Full- and part-time courses are offered from foundation to advanced level in hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy, and make-up techniques. At the time of the inspection 213 learners were enrolled, almost all female with equal numbers of adults and learners aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall, but success rates vary significantly across courses. On intermediate level barbering and advanced level beauty therapy success rates are high. On most courses too many learners leave college early without completing their courses. Learners aged 14 to 16 enjoy college, their success rates are high and a good proportion progress to further education.
- This year managers are implementing effective strategies to reduce the number of learners who leave early. Retention has improved on all courses in comparison to the previous year. On intermediate level hairdressing and theatrical and media make-up courses retention has improved significantly.
- Learners' progress is satisfactory. Their progression between levels within the college is satisfactory. A high number of learners secure employment at the end of their courses. Their employment-related skills are enhanced through high quality work placements and by taking part in competitions and visits to trade fairs.
- Learners develop good commercial and professional skills. They learn the importance of maintaining high standards of corporate identity through wearing the correct uniform and by ensuring that their general appearance reflects the demands of commercial salons. Most learners work courteously and are respectful of each other and their clients. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was low.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers place a high priority on developing learners' awareness of the importance of health and safety and they ensure that learning is linked to employers' expectations. In these lessons learners make good progress. They develop appropriate technical skills and professional competencies in, for example, liaising with clients and displaying a professional ethos in the salon environment.
- In weaker lessons, teachers do not identify the learning outcomes for the sessions precisely enough to be able to monitor learners' progress. Insufficient emphasis is placed on key health and safety issues such as sterilisation, which does not prepare learners effectively for employment.
- Learners are set long-term targets but they are not given suitable interim milestones against which their progress can be monitored rigorously. The progress of learners on apprenticeships is monitored well. They schedule their

own assessments arranging client appointments and assessors visit them in the salon. Employers are not involved sufficiently in the development of the curriculum and the review process for apprentices.

- The curriculum meets the needs of most learners. However, some learners are inappropriately placed on intermediate level programmes. Managers have developed good community links that enhance the curriculum. Learners benefit from hosting treatment sessions for a range of clients including those who have health-related conditions. Established partnerships with four local schools extend the range of vocational provision for pupils aged 14 to 16.
- Learners value the support they receive from their tutors. They receive feedback on their progress against their targets during tutorials. However, their planned tutorial meetings do not always take place. Initial advice and guidance does not always ensure that learners understand the demands of the courses on offer. Good advice for learners who complete their courses helps them to secure employment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment has not been sufficiently effective in improving success rates. The data used to inform the review of the provision are not helpful as success rates from courses across the subject area are aggregated. This makes comparison against national averages difficult and, as a consequence, teachers do not have an accurate view about the standards learners achieve.
- Arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning, although improved this year, have not provided an accurate picture of the quality of the experience provided for learners to inform robust plans for improvement.

What does Macclesfield College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of current strategies to improve retention to ensure that the improvements seen during inspection are maintained and that success rates improve.
- Improve the arrangements for initial advice and guidance to ensure that all learners understand fully the demands of the courses offered.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing support for teachers in setting appropriate learning objectives for their lessons. Rigorously monitor teachers' compliance with commercial standards in health, safety and sterilisation.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment. Ensure that staff have access to reliable data on learners' outcomes that they understand and are able to analyse accurately against appropriate national averages. Identify the causes of underperformance and use these to plan actions for improvement.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 4

Context

44. At the time of the inspection there were 153 learners enrolled, the majority of whom are aged 16 to 18. Courses are offered from foundation to advanced level in visual and performing arts. This includes the higher and advanced Diploma in creative and media, and subsidiary and extended Diplomas re-introduced this year. This year the college is offering A and AS level courses in music, and art and design. A pre-degree foundation course is also offered.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are inadequate. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are low. The rates declined significantly in 2011 as a result of very poor performance on the higher and advanced Diplomas in creative and media. These courses replaced first and national Diplomas that had high success rates in previous years. Even if all of the remaining learners on the advanced Diploma achieve their qualifications, success rates will decline even further in 2012. Success rates on the pre-degree foundation course are high.
- Learners who complete their courses do well; however, too many leave early, or start again on a different programme, as a result of being dissatisfied with the advanced Diploma course. On the higher Diploma, although a high proportion of learners completed in 2011, too few passed the qualification. Functional skills success rates are also low.
- Most current learners enjoy college. They produce work of a good standard. Their attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was good. A minority of lessons, where group work is a key element, are disrupted by poor attendance.
- Managers have developed good links with employers, external clients and voluntary organisations that are used well to provide learners with live briefs and work placements. These prepare them for progression to higher education and employment. For example, learners benefit from working with a local housing organisation, hospitals and schools. Through these activities learners are able to make a good contribution to the community.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers have high expectations of what learners will achieve. They produce well planned assignments that are supported by a good range of resource materials, including ICT, that motivate learners. The teacher provides learners with regular feedback that challenges them to think creatively and to achieve higher standards. Good assessment feedback helps most learners to improve.
- In weaker lessons, the learning materials do not meet learners' varying abilities. Teachers do not insist that learners adopt industry standards in the way they work and this inhibits their progress.

- The creative and media Diplomas, which replaced the first and national Diplomas that were offered in previous years, restrict the specialist options available and, as a result, do not meet the needs and interests of all learners. The decision to introduce these courses has impacted adversely on learners' ability to progress within the college and to higher education. Managers have taken action this year to replace the Diplomas with more traditional art and design courses.
- Information, advice and guidance have improved. In previous years, learners who enrolled on the higher and advanced Diplomas in creative and media did not receive the information they needed to understand the content of these courses. Learners who enrolled expecting a practical programme were disappointed to find that much of the provision was theoretical. As a consequence, many dropped out early, particularly those who expected to be following specialist courses in areas such as fashion and graphics.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The decision to replace the specialist national Diplomas with the higher and advanced Diplomas has not been managed well. Staff did not have easy access to the management information they needed to monitor learners' progress across all of the component parts of these programmes. Recent strategies to improve success rates are now beginning to have a positive impact.
- Self-assessment has not been effective in securing improvements in success rates. The grades awarded and judgements made through self-assessment about the quality of the provision do not take sufficient account of low success rates. The strengths identified in the self-assessment report are merely norms and judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are not robust enough to inform improvement planning.
- Arrangements to identify and share best practice in teaching and learning are not sufficiently effective.

What does Macclesfield College need to do to improve further?

- Rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of recent actions to improve retention and introduce new strategies where needed to improve success rates.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers apply codes of conduct for learners that meet professional standards. Support advanced practitioners in developing and implementing arrangements to identify and share best practice in areas such as assignment design.
- Improve arrangements for initial advice, guidance and induction, to ensure that learners are fully committed to and thoroughly prepared for their chosen programmes.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment in accurately identifying the strengths and areas for improvement in the provision. Use these to inform challenging targets and actions for improvement. Rigorously monitor progress to ensure that targets are met and standards improve.

Information about the inspection

45. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy Principal, 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 body, 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.
46. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. 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)

Macclesfield 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 | 3148 | 75 | 1289 | 1600 | 184 |
| Part-time learners | | | | | |
| Overall effectiveness | 4 | - | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Capacity to improve | 4 | | | | |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 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? | 3 | | | | |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i> | 3 | | | | |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i> | 3 | | | | |
| Quality of provision | 3 | - | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 3 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 3 | | | | |
| 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? | 3 | | | | |
| Leadership and management | 4 | - | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? | 4 | | | | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | 4 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 4 | | | | |
| 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? | 3 | | | | |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners? | 4 | | | | |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money? | 3 | | | | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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