

# Derwentside College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130658

**Name of lead inspector:** Andrew Johnson HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 23 March 2012

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Front Street  
Consett  
County Durham  
DH8 5EE

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## Information about the provider

1. Derwentside College is a small general further education (GFE) college established in 1986, with its main campus, which opened in 2002, in Consett. It is a major provider of post-16 education and training in the semi-rural district of Derwentside in County Durham. An increasing number of organisations also provide training on behalf of the college across the north east of England. The college recruits a high proportion of its learners from areas of significant deprivation. The average level of prior attainment of learners aged 16 to 18 is lower than that typical of those joining most GFE colleges. Derwentside has a very low proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds, although the college has a significantly larger proportion of learners from these groups due to its wider regional work.
2. The college's vision is to provide 'a great place to learn, achieve and succeed'. The nature of the learner population has changed markedly since the last inspection, with considerable growth in apprenticeships and employer-responsive programmes. The majority of current learners are adults engaged in apprenticeships, preparation for work or vocational programmes. The realignment of courses also included a planned withdrawal from A-level courses.
3. The college offers courses in all subject areas except agriculture and art. Vocational and academic provision are offered from foundation to advanced level. Around 40% of learners follow foundation level programmes in literacy and numeracy, including adults taking basic literacy and numeracy qualifications and learners enhancing their functional skills as part of a wider programme of study. Around 7% of learners disclose that they have a learning difficulty and/or disability.
4. The inspection took into account all of the provision offered by the college. Provision in business, administration and law; health and social care; literacy and numeracy; and engineering were inspected in depth.
5. The college does not provide training on behalf of other organisations.
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - Agudist Women's Information Technology Teleworking Group (AWITT)
  - Alkali Training Academy Centre (ATAC)
  - Brenikov Training
  - Future Strategies
  - Group Horizon
  - Learning 4 ever
  - NAC Group PLC
  - Nordic Pioneer Ltd
  - North East Employment and Training Agency (NEETA)

■ Tyneside Training Services Ltd.

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11</b>
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to 16  Further education (16 to 18)  Foundation learning	147 part-time learners  408 full-time learners 943 part-time learners  91 full-time learners 25 part-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)  Foundation learning	145 full-time learners 800 part-time learners  5 full-time learners 21 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships	3,404 learners 1,788 apprentices

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Health and social care	2
Engineering	2
Literacy and numeracy	2
Business, administration and law	2

## Overall effectiveness

7. The college provides a good standard of education and training. Aspirations and standards have risen in most areas and remain high. Learner numbers have grown and the curriculum has been developed and extended to meet the demands of local and regional needs. Most learners on long courses join the college with low levels of prior attainment but their success rates are above average. Teaching and learning are good in most areas. Learners get on well together and there is a harmonious atmosphere. Success rates on the much-expanded apprenticeship programme have improved and are satisfactory. A very high proportion of learners on Train to Gain courses successfully complete their courses.
8. The leadership team, with the support of governors, has made significant strategic changes to assure the college's financial viability and respond to national and regional priorities. It is too soon to judge the success of some of the newer initiatives. However, initial signs augur well for the future. By

applying quality assurance arrangements, the college adds considerably to the work of its subcontractors. Partnership work is outstanding and staff from the different organisations work with a common purpose to benefit learners. Leaders recognise that due to the extent and pace of change and the increased significance of the work of subcontractors there are some high risks associated with this approach. However, the Principal and senior managers take appropriate steps to ensure that these risks are mitigated and the quality of programmes are of a consistently high standard. Social inclusion and maximising opportunity are at the heart of the college's mission. Diversity, tolerance and respect are rigorously promoted.

## Main findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and for older learners on long courses are significantly above the national average. The proportion of successful learners has improved substantially over the last three years and is above the national average. Retention rates are consistently high. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes are good. Apprenticeship success rates have improved and are satisfactory. A high proportion of apprentices successfully complete by their expected end date. The standard of learners' work and their development of vocational skills are good.
- Attendance levels are satisfactory but vary significantly, particularly in functional skills classes. Leaders have taken action to improve attendance and punctuality but it is too early to assess the impact of this work. They took effective action to reduce significant gaps in the success rates of different groups. The college is aware that as it expands its offer it will face even greater challenges to ensure high standards are maintained.
- The college focuses strongly on helping learners find jobs and they are often successful. Learners develop good workplace skills and showcase their skills to employers as a result of the excellent use of work trials and placements.
- Learners benefit from a satisfactory range of support initiatives to enable them to make informed choices about their health and well-being. The college recognises the need to do more work with subcontractors to ensure all learners can access college services. Learners make a positive contribution to their communities, for example, through volunteering for a range of charities and participating in fund-raising activities.
- Excellent partnerships with subcontractors have extended the range of provision available to meet learners' and employers' needs. The college's flexibility and ability to respond quickly to changes in local and national agendas has ensured it provides a wide range of vocational courses not offered by other providers locally.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners generally make good progress in lessons. They succeed in a wide range of vocational activities. The use of assessment and individual training plans is satisfactory overall but varies considerably between courses. Lesson observations are analysed thoroughly and lead to appropriate staff development. Most observers' summary findings

are accurate but some place insufficient emphasis on the impact of academic support on the quality of learning.

- Many learners progress from entry to intermediate and higher levels. Cross-college and curriculum enrichment activities at the main site are good and contribute fully to learners' wider social and emotional development. A high proportion of learners leave college and progress to employment or higher education.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Support for learners' personal and welfare concerns effectively helps them continue their studies. Support for those with additional learning needs is good, with specialist support quickly put in place at the beginning of courses. However, insufficient attention is paid to ensuring academic support for learners is always of a high standard and based on assessed need. Support for apprentices has not always led to high retention rates.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers have created a 'can do' culture among staff and learners. The effectiveness of middle managers has improved and is now good. The governing body offers good support and appropriate challenge to senior leaders on the college's financial and academic performance. However, governors are not able to oversee the quality of provision offered by some subcontractors effectively.
- An inclusive approach is at the heart of the college's mission. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The analysis of the performance of groups is thorough and there is little difference between the success rates of different groups.
- The impact of quality improvement on teaching and learning is good. Data are used effectively to evaluate success and set appropriate targets. Actions taken are consistently successful in bringing about improvement. The college's self-assessment report is broadly accurate and the development plan makes a good contribution to quality improvement.

### **What does Derwentside College need to do to improve further?**

- Raise apprenticeship success rates by sharing good practice between the college and its subcontractors. Ensure that the quality of support apprentices receive enables them to stay to the end of their programmes.
- Improve the impact of academic support by ensuring that all teachers use the results of initial assessment to develop personalised learning plans to meet learners' needs. Ensure advice and guidance are accessible to all learners. Improve the systems used to evaluate the impact of support on learning.
- Improve the oversight of subcontractors by the governing body through a comprehensive analysis of the quality of their provision which is clearly linked to outcomes for learners.
- Strengthen and consolidate the work already started to improve learners' attendance by sharing good practice between departments, particularly in relation to attendance at functional skills lessons.

## **Summary of the views of learners as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What learners like:**

- learning vocational skills
- the friendly and approachable staff
- the emphasis on qualifications
- the strong focus on employment
- being treated as an adult
- the celebration of their success.

### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- a few lessons which are not sufficiently interesting
- teaching facilities and resources in a few areas
- the limited opportunity for progression to higher-level courses in a few areas
- functional skills classes which are not made relevant to their vocational studies.

## **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What employers like:**

- the tailored training apprentices receive to meet employers' business needs
- the good help the college gives them to recruit apprentices
- the improved arrangements for monitoring the progress of apprentices
- the excellent focus on developing real and meaningful partnerships
- the vocational expertise of staff
- the celebration of learners' success.

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

- the employers who gave their views did not recommend any specific areas for improvement.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. Since the previous inspection success rates have improved and the good quality of provision has been maintained. All subject areas inspected in detail were good. Improvement has been most notable in achievement rates of learners on long vocational courses, which are now very high. Learners' attendance has improved but still varies across the college. Teaching and learning are good. Quality improvement arrangements have improved and are now good. Self-assessment accurately identifies the strengths and key areas for improvement.
10. The college has significantly realigned its curriculum and its management structure. At the same time it has strengthened its performance management arrangements. The number of learners has increased significantly. It has successfully adapted to meet local, regional and national priorities and developed outstanding partnership arrangements. The current financial position is sound but the college recognises the need to continue to guard against the potential risks of using subcontracted provision. Governors demonstrate a strong commitment to maintain and improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. However, they need to develop a more robust approach to the oversight of the work of subcontractors.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. Learners' achievements and the progress they make in lessons are good. They develop a broad range of vocational skills and deepen their understanding and subject knowledge. Learners make good progress towards achieving their employment goals. The proportions of full-time learners who achieve their qualifications improved significantly between 2008/09 and 2010/11 and are now above the national average for similar colleges. Retention rates are high. However, on a few programmes, for example the Access to Higher Education course, retention rates are low. Pass rates are well above average on almost all long programmes. However, results in A-level courses are more variable and were below average in 2010/11. The college will cease to run these courses from September 2012.
12. Success rates in most subject areas are good and improving. Success rates are broadly in line with national averages in a significant minority of long programmes, including hairdressing and beauty therapy, leisure and travel, history, and education subjects. A high proportion of learners join the college with below average prior attainment in science, mathematics and English; success rates are generally low in these subjects at AS-level.
13. Success rates are good on Train to Gain programmes. A large majority of learners complete their programmes by their expected end date. Overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory, with most learners completing their programmes on time. Retention rates have been satisfactory on most apprenticeships, but college data indicates improvements



this year. Success rates on courses organised by subcontractors are broadly similar to those of the college.

14. The achievement gap between male and female learners on long courses has narrowed. However, female apprentices continue to do slightly better than males. Learners aged between 16 and 18 from minority ethnic groups perform well compared to all learners. However, the small number of adult learners from these groups are less successful. The participation rate of learners from minority ethnic groups in apprenticeships has improved significantly. Apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds take longer than average to complete their programmes. The success rate for learners receiving additional support is good.
15. Attendance levels vary significantly but are satisfactory overall. The college has set more ambitious targets for attendance and has adopted a more robust approach to monitoring it. There are signs of improvement in some areas, although attendance at some functional skills classes is poor.
16. Learners develop good personal and social skills that enhance their employability. Nearly all learners who complete their courses move on to employment or further education. Employed learners receive effective support from their employers to develop the skills needed for their chosen career. Large numbers of learners progress from foundation to intermediate courses and onto apprenticeships. A high proportion of learners successfully gain places in higher education.
17. Learners say that they feel safe at the college, and inspection evidence confirms that appropriate policies and procedures are followed. Learners behave considerately towards each other and staff both inside and outside the classroom. Bullying is very rare but when incidents happen they are dealt with very effectively.
18. Learners make well informed choices about their health and well-being. They benefit from the well established college partnerships with a range of specialist agencies. However, the college does too little to evaluate the impact of this work, particularly for learners at subcontracted providers. Sports provision and participation are limited despite some good attempts by the college to increase participation. A lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) drop-in facility has recently been added to the menu of services available.
19. Learners make a good contribution to the community through volunteering and charitable projects. Many learners are involved in initiatives to raise money for charities such as Sport Relief. Sports students coach pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from local schools, learners on public service courses volunteer for the National Trust and learners are frequently involved in college-wide initiatives to raise money for national charities.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

20. Teaching and learning are good. Learners make good progress. In the better lessons they benefit from a wide range of learning activities, group work, peer assessment and presentations. Teachers guide them to investigate new material and work independently, which builds their confidence and ability to work in teams. The careful planning of lessons ensures learners from a wide range of abilities make good progress. The majority of learners develop good work-related skills. Good opportunities are provided to assist learners in evaluating their own learning. Most teachers use questions very effectively to help learners develop their knowledge and understanding. However, in a few cases the level of questioning is not sufficiently challenging. Teachers make satisfactory use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enliven learning.
21. Learners are fully prepared for assessments. Teachers provide clear assignment briefs. Although marked work is returned promptly, teachers do not always provide sufficiently detailed written feedback to learners on how to improve their work, with too little attention paid to the correction of spellings and grammar. Apprentices are not always sufficiently involved in setting or reviewing their targets. The construction and review of individual learning plans for all learners is often too teacher-led and, as a result, becomes a superficial exercise.
22. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and they benefit from continuing professional development. Teachers draw on their industrial knowledge to deepen learners' understanding of their subject. Resources are good and classrooms, salons, workshops and kitchens, equipped to industry standard, provide good environments for learning. Subcontractors provide high-specification industry-standard environments. Health and safety are given high priority in lessons.
23. Arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning are good. Well trained observers accurately identify good practice and staff development needs. Managers use this information to encourage excellence in teaching. Course teams share ideas and obtain learners' feedback to develop new approaches to teaching. Equality and diversity are fully integrated in some areas of learning. For example, hairdressing learners could describe very effectively the reasons to be non-judgemental about client sexuality.
24. Learners benefit from a good range of provision. The college has effectively refocused its provision towards helping learners find sustainable employment. It has significantly increased its pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship offer. Good use is made of labour-market information and links with employers to define the curriculum. Coherent progression routes to further study or employment are offered in most areas. The college is introducing advanced apprenticeships into the minority of areas where there is insufficient advanced provision. Through its commitment to offering a wide range of provision locally it runs some courses with low learner numbers.

25. Learners achieve a good range of additional qualifications to enhance their employability. For example, childcare learners take paediatric first aid, food safety, and care and early years in childcare settings. Vocational learners benefit from functional skills and work skills to prepare for employment. Employers appreciate learners' good information and communication technology (ICT) and literacy skills which benefit their businesses.
26. The use of partnerships to develop provision to meet learners' needs is outstanding. Partnerships with subcontractors, employers and local schools extend and develop the range, levels, type and location of provision. The college is widely recognised by the local community for its contribution in helping learners find employment and by employers for developing high quality employees. Employers are involved in designing learning programmes which are customised to meet employers' specialisms. Particularly strong partnerships exist to engage learners who have been unemployed for some time. Effective links with schools have resulted in excellent success rates in young apprenticeships. Many local employers approach the college when they are looking to recruit employees.
27. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Individual learners benefit from good specialist support. Learners report that the highly individualised approach assists their learning effectively. Learners' special needs are identified promptly and learners receiving support achieve as well as their peers. One-to-one support provided in the classroom is effective. However, some learners do not get good academic support from teachers who do not use the information they have adequately to adapt learning materials and support learners. Some apprentices have not received sufficient support to keep them on programmes although current college data indicate this is improving.
28. Appropriate guidance is provided using a range of methods to provide learners with advice on topics such as health and well-being, equality and diversity, and staying safe. However, the information provided is not always accessible to learners with special needs and few alternative formats are available. The college recognises the need to improve its evaluation of the impact of care, guidance and support on learning.
29. Learners benefit from the specialist support of external services including the child and adolescent mental health service, young carers service, drug and alcohol team and bereavement counselling. Good induction arrangements prepare learners for their programme of learning and effective careers advice enables them to move on to higher education.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

30. Leadership and management are good. The Principal and governors set a clear vision and strategic direction for the college. The senior management team has developed explicit aims that focus on ensuring their high aspirations are achieved. The college is particularly successful in ensuring learners move on to employment. Overall success rates are good for most qualifications. The

development and delivery plans take account of local and regional needs and make good use of labour-market information to meet the needs of learners and employers.

31. In the past two years, the college has significantly realigned its curriculum and management structures to focus on apprenticeship programmes. It has worked successfully with employers to develop more programmes that prepare learners for work. Staff share a common sense of purpose and work cooperatively with their partners and employers. The college provides relevant courses for members of the local community and, through its work with subcontractors, in the wider region.
32. The Principal and senior managers understand the high risk associated with the more regional approach. Good systems are in place to mitigate this risk including regular detailed monitoring reports to senior managers. Reports focus on the performance of subcontractors financially and in terms of outcomes for learners. Where partners have not met the college's high standards contractual partnerships are ended.
33. Curriculum management is strong. The Director of Curriculum and Quality has developed an effective strategy for continuous improvement. A sharply focused improvement plan and frequent and effective performance management drive improvement. The college recognises that the current arrangements to monitor the impact of support on learning are underdeveloped. There is good staff development, including peer mentoring that helps teachers to develop excellent practice.
34. Governors have been influential in developing the new strategic direction. They have good local knowledge and a range of professional skills and experience that they use effectively to support senior managers. They have high expectations of senior managers and challenge them robustly about financial performance and outcomes for learners. However, governors are not in a sufficiently strong position to gain an accurate overview of the quality of provision of subcontractors. Governors recognise that the board does not adequately represent the student community and are actively seeking to address this issue.
35. Equality and diversity are well promoted. Promotional activities are highlighted in staff development sessions and identified in lesson observations. There are clear and fully understood procedures to protect learners from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Learners know how to ask for support and report incidents. They say that they feel respected and safe. The few incidents of bullying are dealt with in line with college procedures and learners are satisfied with the outcomes. The college has closed most gaps in success rates for different groups of learners.
36. The college recruits a high number of learners from areas of deprivation and high levels of unemployment. Together with partners, it is committed to raising learners' aspirations and ensuring that they acquire work skills. The college has

recognised that poverty can be a barrier to successful learning and has put in place a good range of financial support, including free travel passes, free meals and support to purchase equipment for vocational courses. This is highly appreciated by learners.

37. The college's work with subcontractors and employers is very effective and is central to its new vision. Its regional profile and role have been enhanced through a network of partnerships and strong positive links with employers across the region. The college is seen by local employers as a key strategic partner in providing apprenticeships and employment-related training.
38. Partnership arrangements are extremely successful. The college has invested in four regional centres to extend provision. Subcontractors take part in useful college professional development activities and share college resources. This approach has added value and benefited both the college and its subcontractors. Partners speak positively of the open and strong relationships that exist. These are typified by one partner who said, 'The college has been unique in its willingness to invest in and develop partnerships'. Learners are involved in a range of activities, including focus groups, that involve them in decision making and encourage them to give feedback on their course and college facilities. In response to learners' comments, timetables have been altered and communal social space and classrooms have been improved.
39. Quality improvement activities are good and have been significantly strengthened since the previous inspection. Course reviews, lesson observations and performance management are focused on improving learner outcomes and increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning. Curriculum managers and course leaders receive accurate performance data at subject and course level. Through regular review meetings, swift action is taken when learners, college courses or provision with subcontractors are at risk of poor performance. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The improvement process is rigorous, with specific and measurable targets which are regularly reviewed and updated. The college is working hard to ensure that quality processes used by subcontractors are equally effective.
40. Senior managers receive and act upon timely and accurate financial monitoring reports. Financial surpluses are reinvested in the building and to upgrade learner resources and equipment. Accommodation is good and well maintained. Vocational equipment is of industry standard. Given the good success rates, the high quality of teaching and learning and the investment in resources the college provides good value for money.

## Subject areas

### Health, social care and public services

### Grade 2

#### Context

41. Full- and part-time courses are available from foundation to advanced level in health and social care, childcare, and public services. There are more than 70 learners on courses based at the college, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. Most full-time learners undertake additional short courses. Approximately 1,500 learners are apprentices. Around 70 learners take part in Train to Gain courses. The vast majority of learners are female and a very small proportion come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on full-time college courses are well above the national average. Success rates for apprentices are also above the national average. Most apprentices complete their programmes in the prescribed time. Success rates for Train to Gain learners have fallen to around average levels. Retention on most programmes is good.
- Learners enjoy their studies and make good progress. They have good attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. Individual progress reviews are supportive and realistic targets are agreed with learners at each review which are then followed through to ensure they make good progress. At advanced level, learners produce good work which is detailed and relates theory to practice.
- Learners make good progress in acquiring and developing a range of employability and social skills. Functional skills are integrated effectively into lessons and this means learners value them and make good progress. Most learners achieve additional qualifications in paediatric first aid, babysitting, food hygiene, and moving and handling.
- Learners feel safe in college and in the workplace. They are confident in knowing where to go to report incidents of bullying and harassment and to seek support. College policies, procedure and information are clear and appropriately enforced.
- Learners make well informed choices about their health and well-being. They receive effective support and advice about healthy lifestyles through their coursework and weekly drop-in sessions held by care practitioners. Learners on most courses make a good contribution to the community through involvement in fund-raising activities and through work placements.
- The majority of teaching and learning is good. The best lessons have a good range of activities that create a lively learning environment and effectively link theory to practice. Less effective lessons lack sufficiently challenging activities. Learners' profiles are not always used consistently enough to inform lesson planning and provide learners with the academic support they need.

- Teachers' use of assessment is generally good. In the best lessons, learners clearly know what evidence is required to meet assessment criteria. However, learners on intermediate courses do not always know how their learning links to the assessment criteria. Feedback on written and practical work is detailed and constructive and it enables learners to improve the quality of their work. Attainment is effectively tracked and challenging targets are set.
- Learners benefit from a good range of provision that provides clear progression routes from foundation to advanced level. Many learners progress to care and childcare apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships with local employers.
- Very good relationships have been developed with a wide range of external partners. Provision has been effectively developed in response to local needs through employer forums.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are effective. Personal and academic support provided by tutors is valued by learners. However, individual learning plans are not always used effectively to capture details of learners' aspirations and support needs.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers have increased the focus on quality improvement. Staff attend appropriate external training courses and good practice is shared at curriculum team meetings.
- Staff contribute fully to self-assessment which is helpful in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Staff use data effectively to monitor attendance, retention and success rates. Course quality audits are effective. Good promotion of equality and diversity by staff ensures learners are not disadvantaged. Arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of learners are good.

### **What does Derwentside College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the less effective lessons by ensuring teachers use more appropriate assessment and better questioning in lessons to check learners' understanding.
- Ensure that all learners are fully aware of assessment criteria and that links to these criteria are made more clearly in lessons.
- Ensure teachers use more detailed learner profiles to set lesson activities that are tailor-made to meet learners' needs.

## Engineering

## Grade 2

### Context

42. The department offers full-time courses in electrical maintenance and installation, fabrication, welding and mechanical engineering from foundation to advanced level. Part-time courses are offered in electrical engineering, fabrication and welding. Around 200 learners are based at the college, about half are apprentices, 60 are pupils from local schools and less than 10 are on Train to Gain programmes. About a quarter of these learners are aged over 19. More than 300 learners are enrolled on an intermediate level programme organised by a subcontractor. Approximately 5% of learners are female and about the same proportion come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for learners of all ages have improved over the last three years and are now high. Overall, the success rates of apprenticeships have significantly improved and are now outstanding. Advanced apprenticeship numbers have grown and success rates are now high. Most apprentices complete their programmes in the time predicted. Train to Gain success rates are in line with the national average.
- Learners make good progress in developing their vocational skills and in improving their economic and social well-being. Many progress into employment. They demonstrate very good skill levels in practical sessions. For example, in one class, learners produced welds to high standards and in another, the quality of young apprentices' practical machining projects was extremely high. In functional skills lessons the attendance of engineering learners is poor.
- Progression rates between college courses and into apprenticeships are very good. Learners feel safe, and health and safety have a high profile in the department. Learners wear appropriate safety equipment and work safely, and there are rigorous checks made in the workplace and during review. Employers comment that learners acquire good knowledge of safe working practices while at college.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the better sessions, there is good planning, a good range of activities and learners take charge of their own learning. Direct, probing and challenging questions are used effectively to test learners' understanding. In other sessions, where more open questions are used, some learners avoid participating. Session planning sometimes lacks rigour and there is insufficient use of assessment information to provide academic support. In subcontracted provision, learners are highly engaged and motivated to learn.
- There is insufficiently robust tracking of learners' academic support needs and this slows progress towards the achievement of learning goals. Some apprenticeship reviews are insufficiently detailed and others lack simple, measurable targets.



- Learners are made work-ready through a simple system which measures their conduct, behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Learners are highly motivated by this system to improve their skills. A certificate of job-readiness is awarded to successful learners and this is valued by them and their employers.
- Learners benefit from the good range of provision in mechanical, electrical, fabrication and welding programmes. This meets the needs of the community and allows learners to progress successfully into employment. There is a good range of resources available for use in practical sessions. All workshops are of a good quality and are fully maintained.
- Partnerships are outstanding. A motor industry subcontractor delivers high quality employability programmes to large numbers of job seekers, many of whom progress into employment in that sector. The resources are of the highest quality and replicate those found in industry.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Initial assessment of learners' needs is carried out during induction and individual specialist support is put in place as required. In all lessons observed, there was little additional academic support given to learners and for some this slowed their progress.
- Leadership and management are good. An employer forum meets monthly to discuss needs and there is governor representation. This has a positive impact on the recruitment of apprentices. The engineering department is successful in meeting challenging recruitment targets for apprentices. Careful matching of learners to employers' needs ensure successful placements and good employment opportunities.

### **What does Derwentside College need to do to improve further?**

- Develop and promote the value and importance of functional skills to engineering learners. Ensure attendance levels are high and learners make good progress in functional skills classes.
- Ensure that the teaching techniques observed in the best sessions are shared with others through more peer support and continuing professional development. In particular, ensure teachers use initial assessment information as a basis for providing good academic support to all learners.
- Enhance the tracking and review process to make it more relevant and useful, thus ensuring that all learners make good progress and meet their learning goals.

## Literacy and numeracy

## Grade 2

### Context

43. The college offers a wide range of Skills for Life provision, including functional skills and adult literacy and numeracy at all levels both at the college and within the workplace. There are approximately 400 learners attending college, many of whom take one or more of the functional skills as part of their main vocational programme. There are approximately 500 Skills for Life learners in the workplace. Approximately half of the learners are female and a relatively low proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners achieve well in literacy and numeracy within the workplace. Functional skills success rates are satisfactory overall but vary considerably. For example, there are outstanding success rates in mathematics at foundation and intermediate levels, but low success rates in English at entry level.
- College data indicate that attendance is usually good. However, there is great variation. In a minority of cases, learners are not sufficiently motivated to attend functional skills lessons. In the lessons observed, attendance varied from very good to poor. Learners on mainstream courses develop enhanced literacy and numeracy skills which improve their employability.
- Learners feel safe and arrangements to ensure they are safeguarded are effective. They know where to go and who to ask for help and support and are fully aware of how to report any concerns. Learners are confident that members of staff deal effectively with any issues.
- Learners develop highly effective skills which enable them to participate within the community and contribute to the care of others.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough and inform subsequent teaching and planning. However, learners sometimes have little awareness of their targets and this slows progress. In the best sessions, teachers plan thoroughly for individual needs, identify differentiated learning materials and use motivating, vocationally relevant activities.
- Though many excellent teaching resources are available, teachers sometimes use them to focus too much on the development of technical skills in mathematics and English grammar, failing to maximise the use of vocational materials.
- Support to ensure learners are successful is good in the workplace, with accurate tracking and assessment of needs. However, for learners based at the college there is insufficient specific support particularly at entry level. Marking sometimes lacks depth and, as a consequence, is less effective in supporting learners to improve their work.

- The needs and interests of learners are met in many classes where schemes of work are linked to the vocational area, prioritising the needs of the individual and those of the vocational curriculum.
- The college has established very strong partnerships to support the Skills for Life needs of most learners. The subcontracted providers ensure effective support is in place for learners with identified special needs and one-to-one and group support are effective at all levels.
- The new management team has begun to develop and embed a clear strategy for functional skills. There is a strong positive and cooperative culture across the provision. Good resources are available for all staff. However, there is sometimes insufficient coordination between other departments and the functional skills team to ensure appropriate timetabling. The self-assessment report is accurate and it identifies key strengths and areas for improvement.

### **What does Derwentside College need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that initial assessment leads to an effective individual learning plan to develop greater ownership for the learner and to ensure effective support strategies are in place.
- Embed a more individual and vocational approach to functional skills teaching to ensure learners always attend and are well motivated.
- Provide more constructive written feedback to learners to enable them to improve their performance.
- Develop the coordination of functional skills within all vocational areas to ensure effective models of delivery are developed and shared.

## Business, administration and law

## Grade 2

### Context

44. The college offers full-time and part-time courses from foundation to higher level in business administration and accounting. The majority of learners who attend college business courses are aged 16 to 18. The apprenticeship provision has grown considerably with more than 850 apprentices enrolled at intermediate and advanced levels. The majority of learners are female with a small representation from minority ethnic groups.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good and particularly so on programmes based at the college. Success rates are good and have improved on the majority of courses. Most apprentices complete their programmes on time with overall success rates above the national average.
- The standard of learners' work is good and portfolios show learners make good progress towards their qualification. Learners develop their employability skills successfully by working on real-life scenarios. These are supported by relevant and up-to-date contributions from employers and external speakers. Learners progress to suitable employment opportunities as a result of the skills they acquire at the college.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, ILT is used effectively to enhance learning. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches to engage learners including question and answer techniques to check learners' progress. Teachers are adept at using individual praise to encourage learners and provide them with step-by-step solutions to more difficult tasks.
- The assessment of learners' work is generally good. Teachers make sure learners' portfolios are up-to-date so that their progress can be effectively tracked. In a minority of cases, the feedback learners receive on their work is insufficiently detailed to enable them to understand where they need to improve.
- The curriculum is highly responsive to the needs of learners and employers. Strong partnerships have been developed with local employers. Learners can select a good range of options on the apprenticeship programme. Individual units of work have been modified as a direct result of employers' feedback to ensure learners are developing skills required within the industry.
- Learners receive good support. Those who need additional support are provided with the extra help they require. When starting their course, careful checks are made to ensure that learners are on the correct course and level and adjustments are made promptly where needed. The progress learners make is closely monitored but individual learning plans are not used effectively to identify clearer targets for further improvement.

- Leadership and management are good. Managers promote high expectations which inform and link to staff appraisals. Staff benefit from well organised training opportunities to improve their skills.
- Self-assessment accurately identifies the majority of areas for improvement and action is effective. Improvements in success rates and curriculum delivery have resulted from effective quality assurance arrangements.
- Equality and diversity are effectively promoted during lessons. Opportunities are taken at appropriate stages in the curriculum to relate topics to learners in their area of work. For example, in one lesson learners were successfully made aware of the good practice in disability awareness during interview procedures.
- The views of learners are sought and acted upon. For example, learners have delivered a presentation on the areas for improvement to managers. Prompt action has been taken by the college to address the issues raised by the learners.

### **What does Derwentside College need to do to improve further?**

- Provide more precise information in individual learning plans to enable teachers to personalise work to meet learners' needs and enhance their progress.
- Improve the quality of written feedback to learners in order to improve their understanding of what they need to do to improve.

## Information about the inspection

45. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's Director of 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 body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.
46. 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 college. 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)**

**Derwentside College**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>					
Full-time learners	2,941	0	342	107	2,492
Part-time learners	976	40	169	187	580
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2				
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<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>	2				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	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?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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