Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	130527
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Type of provider:	General Further Education College
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Information about the provider

1. Rotherham College of Arts and Technology is the only large general further education college in the Rotherham area. It operates from the town centre campus and from a campus eight miles away in Dinnington. A new principal started at the college in September 2010. Most of its provision is vocational education and training. The college's mission is 'Dedicated to your learning'.

2. The college has provision in 14 subject areas, the largest of which are preparation for life and work; health, public services and care; and arts, media and publishing. Just over 300 students are on apprenticeship programmes and 570 are on Train to Gain provision. Approximately 70% of funding is from the Young People's Learning Agency and the remainder is from the Skills Funding Agency.

3. Most students, with the exception of those on Train to Gain programmes, are from Rotherham. Many are from wards of significant multiple deprivation. Approximately 90% are from a White background and students from Asian British and Pakistani backgrounds form the largest minority ethnic groups. The proportion of female learners is 54%. In Rotherham the proportion of young people who gain five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is 47%. This is the same as in South Yorkshire but is below the national average.

4. Inspectors collected evidence from most parts of the college and inspected four subject areas in depth: learner-responsive provision in visual and performing arts; and in literacy, numeracy, key skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); learner- and employer-responsive provision in health, social care and childcare; and in engineering and manufacturing technologies.

5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:

   ■ Develop Training Limited
   ■ JTL
   ■ Brinsworth Training
   ■ DETA 2000 Ltd
   ■ Metskills
   ■ Construction Skills
   ■ Npower
   ■ Huddersfield University
   ■ Morthyng

6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:

- Aspect
- Business Development Unit
- Develop-U
- Enable
- MENCAP
- Met-UK
- Reclaim
- SOOSN
- Sheffield School of Health and Beauty

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	455 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	2,250 full-time learners 347 part-time learners
Foundation learning	1,526 full-time learners 1,789 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	779 full-time learners 5,859 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	1,288 learners 356 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3

Capacity to improve	Grade 3

	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	Grade
Health, social care and childcare	3
Engineering	2
Visual and performing arts	2
Literacy, numeracy, key skills and ESOL	3

Overall effectiveness

7.   Rotherham College of Arts and Technology is a satisfactory college with satisfactory capacity to improve. Most students enjoy college life and feel very safe. Outcomes for adult students have improved and are satisfactory, whereas outcomes for students aged 16 to 18 declined in 2009/10 and are low, especially at advanced level. Many of these students come from areas of very high disadvantage. Students on apprenticeship programmes achieve satisfactorily but those on Train to Gain programmes take too long to complete their training. Students' progression within and from the college is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although most students enjoy their lessons, especially practical ones, they do not always receive enough challenge to motivate them to excel. The wide range of courses and levels meets the needs of students and employers well. Students benefit from the good partnerships which the college promotes. They obtain satisfactory information and guidance from staff. The support they receive is good. The college works very effectively with students from disadvantaged backgrounds

and helps them to overcome barriers to learning. Students needing additional learning support progress and achieve well.

8. Governors, leaders and managers do much to ensure the safety of students. They promote equality and diversity very effectively and achieve high levels of educational and social inclusion. They lead and govern the college satisfactorily. Managers have improved their self-assessment and quality assurance systems and aim to improve the consistency and quality of provision, especially for students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates for adult students have risen and are satisfactory. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 declined in 2009/10 and are low at intermediate and advanced levels. The main cause of low success rates is low retention. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 are satisfactory.

- Success rates on apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory but the proportion of students completing Train to Gain programmes within the expected timescale is low. Key skills success rates have increased and are above average, except for the small number of students at advanced level.

- Many students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses have low success rates and make insufficient progress; few achieve high grades. Many of these students come from areas of very high deprivation.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers use their industrial expertise appropriately to link theory to practice and to develop students' employability skills effectively. Too many lessons however, do not challenge all students sufficiently because the range of activities is too narrow and the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning is underdeveloped.

- Assessment is satisfactory. Staff use the new review system to monitor students' progress more closely than previously. Teachers' marking is accurate, but their written feedback does not always explain fully what students need to do to improve. Teachers miss opportunities in lessons to assess students' learning through effective questioning techniques.

- Managers have improved the lesson observation system but observers do not always place sufficient emphasis on students' learning when judging the quality of lessons and on using the outcomes to inform self-assessment and staff development.

- The range of courses is wide and clear progression routes exist. Partnership working is good and has a strong emphasis on provision which increases the confidence and employability skills of those who have to overcome significant barriers to learn. Arrangements to enrich the students' experience are good. Managers do not gather the views of employers thoroughly enough.

- Guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff complete initial advice and assessment promptly. Personal support is good. The provision of additional learning support is highly effective. Tutorial arrangements have improved and

are satisfactory. Current retention and attendance rates are higher than at the same time last year.

■ Staff place a clear emphasis on inclusivity, meeting the needs of the local community. Partnership working is strong. The strategic plan links well to national and regional priorities and to the college's operating plans. Managers aim to develop a culture of high aspiration at all levels.

■ Staff have embedded safeguarding very effectively throughout the college. Students feel very safe and know how to access support. Checks on staff, governors and volunteers are comprehensive and good training is in place. Risk management is robust. The links with external agencies to support the most vulnerable students are highly effective.

■ Managers use quality assurance and self-assessment to promote improvements in many, but not all, areas. Although they have introduced new systems, further work is necessary to embed these processes. The reliability of data and their use to analyse areas for development are improving. Governors monitor financial aspects effectively but their monitoring of students' performance is underdeveloped.

■ The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers have developed a culture of respect and all students feel welcome in the college. Staff cater for students from a diverse range of backgrounds and for the most vulnerable students very effectively. Most curriculum areas strongly promote and celebrate equality and diversity.

What does Rotherham College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

■ For students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses, increase their success rates, the progress they make, the proportion of high grades they achieve and their success rates on advanced level functional skills courses, by ensuring they are on the correct course and that their progress is rigorously monitored.

■ Ensure that students complete Train to Gain and apprenticeship qualifications within the expected timescales so that success rates increase.

■ Improve the quality of teaching and learning by increasing the focus of the internal lesson observation system on the quality of learning and by ensuring that teachers use a range of activities, including the use of ILT, to challenge and engage all students.

■ Ensure that teachers use effective questioning techniques to carry out frequent checks on learning and that they use challenging and specific targets in individual learning plans in order to analyse students' progress more closely.

■ Develop the recently introduced tutorial arrangements and their consistent implementation so that support for students is increasingly effective in all areas.

■ Improve the arrangements for gathering the views of employers and students. Also ensure that a larger group of employers has the opportunity to express its views and that managers analyse students' views more thoroughly.

- Embed a culture of high aspirations among all staff and students by ensuring that managers in all areas use quality assurance processes to support improvement and develop the use of data and target setting to monitor and analyse students' progress.

- Extend the high levels of governors' expertise seen in the monitoring of financial matters to that of monitoring students' performance by ensuring governors receive appropriate information and training on this aspect of their role.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- feeling safe in college and the high visibility of security staff

- the mutual respect between staff and students

- learning centres which are good places in which to work thanks to helpful staff

- approachable, knowledgeable and supportive teachers and assessors who have good industrial experience and give praise for good work

- having improved confidence and skills and feeling more ready to take the next step into employment

- enjoyable practical lessons and the variety of work done in these lessons

- the good range and quality of resources and equipment used in lessons

- the range of educational trips and work experience.

What learners would like to see improved:

- uninteresting theory lessons so that they have more variety of work

- the availability of lockers

- key skills work and lessons

- the timetable to reduce the large gaps in the day without lessons and to ensure rooms are not double booked

- the limited access to, and slow speed of, many of the computers and the underdeveloped website

- the lack of space in the canteens

- the noise outside rooms which makes it difficult to concentrate in lessons

- the insufficiently large areas for private study in the learning centres.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good working relationships with the work-based reviewers and the well-managed and useful individual reviews

- well-qualified and experienced assessors and helpful and informative account managers

- the willingness of the college to provide bespoke training

- very good communication and prompt, sound and professional response to enquiries
- the empathy shown to mature students.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the delays in enrolling apprentices on provision advertised as roll-on, roll-off programmes
- the delays in receiving progress updates from some assessors.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement   Grade 3

9.   The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Although there have been improvements in a number of areas, these are not consistent. Success rates for adult students on long courses have risen for the last three years and are now broadly average. Those for students aged from 16 to 18 declined in 2009/10 after showing an upward trend and are now below comparable rates, particularly so for advanced level courses. Progress has been made on most areas for improvement identified at the last inspection but certain issues remain, particularly low retention.

10.   Managers have strengthened the self-assessment and quality assurance processes for this year. They are aware that further work to embed developments in all areas is necessary. The positive effects of recently introduced strategies are already evident, although it is too early to judge their full impact. Managers prioritise areas for improvement and put carefully considered plans in place to address them. They use targets at all levels to monitor the progress made against these action plans. Strong financial control enables managers to develop resources to support improvement, such as the new building now under construction. Managers use students' and employers' views to develop provision satisfactorily.

Outcomes for learners   Grade 3

11.   Outcomes for students are satisfactory. According to college data for 2009/10, success rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 declined and are below national rates. Their success rates at advanced level have been very low for several years. Success rates on foundation and intermediate levels are the lowest for three years. Many of these students come from areas of extreme disadvantage. Adults' attainments, however, increased in 2009/10 and are satisfactory. Success rates for adults at foundation and intermediate levels are the highest for three years. The main reason for low success rates is low retention rates, especially for students aged 16 to 18 at intermediate and advanced levels. College data indicate that current retention rates are higher than at the same time in 2009/10. Most pass rates are satisfactory. Short course success rates for students aged 16 to 18 have improved but are low, as they are for adults. Students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses make insufficient progress compared with their prior attainment. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 improved in 2009/10 and are satisfactory. The proportion of high grades achieved on most courses, except at advanced level, is satisfactory.

12.   Most students from minority ethnic backgrounds succeed satisfactorily, except those from Black African backgrounds. Success rates by male and female students are similar. Students receiving additional learning support are more successful than those not receiving support. Students who have literacy and

numeracy support are more likely to be retained and achieve than students without such support.

13. The numbers of students taking key skills have increased significantly over the last three years and their success rates have improved to above average. This is especially so at foundation and intermediate levels but success rates at advanced level are low. Overall success rates on Train to Gain provision have been satisfactory for three years up to 2008/09 but they declined in 2009/10. The proportion of students completing their programme within the expected time is low. Overall apprenticeship success rates and the proportion of students completing their programme within the expected time have increased and are satisfactory.

14. Students' progression between foundation and intermediate levels has improved and is satisfactory. Progression from the college to employment or higher education is also satisfactory. College data indicate that attendance is higher than at the same time in 2009/10 and is satisfactory. Most students are punctual. They enjoy their work and college life, and feel very safe in their learning environment. The development of their economic and social well-being is good**.** Students receive adequate information about health and well-being. They make a satisfactory contribution to college life and to their community, and are involved in charitable fundraising. The promotion of community cohesion is good.

The quality of provision   Grade 3

15. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They have aspects which are good but there are too few outstanding lessons. Teachers link the theoretical and practical elements of the courses carefully. They consider the development of students' literacy, numeracy and broader social skills as well as their academic and vocational skills. In a significant minority of lesson plans, however, teachers give insufficient attention to the outcomes of students' initial assessments. Teachers usually support students to complete their set tasks effectively. At times, however, teachers give too much assistance and students do not develop their independent learning skills.

16. In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of activities to engage students and develop their confidence and enthusiasm for the subject. They encourage students to reflect on their learning in a productive and professional working atmosphere. The promotion of health and safety principles and safe working practices is good. The promotion of equality and diversity is also good. In the less effective lessons, the start is slow and the emphasis on clear learning outcomes is lacking. Students progress slowly. Students who complete activities promptly do not have supplementary or challenging activities to increase their learning and understanding. Teachers' questioning techniques fail to develop or check on students' learning. Their use of ILT to aid learning is underdeveloped.

17. Assessment is satisfactory and meets the requirements of external awarding bodies. Art and design students receive detailed comments on how to improve the quality of their work and how to achieve a higher grade but this is not

always the case in other areas. Staff use a new review system to monitor students' progress more closely than used to be the case but occasionally targets are too vague. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, staff supplement the central system with a detailed log of students' learning and skills development. Staff identify students at risk of not achieving promptly.

18. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and motivate most students to complete relevant tasks successfully. Many teachers have appropriate and extensive industrial expertise which they use to good effect to illustrate key concepts. They receive good support to develop their classroom practices through a broad range of staff development opportunities. Learning champions and learning centre staff assist teachers to develop their skills, and in particular their effective use of ILT.

19. Managers revised the internal lesson observation process following recognition through self-assessment that observers were over optimistic. Managers use observation outcomes to inform staff development, appraisal and self-assessment satisfactorily. They recently introduced greater rigour by using subject-specialist observers. Inspectors found a broad level of agreement in the joint lesson observations with internal observers. Nevertheless, internal observers give insufficient emphasis to students' learning in their grading and feedback to teachers.

20. The college meets the needs of its students and local employers well. A wide range of courses and clear progression routes enable students to study at an appropriate level and subsequently to take further qualifications. Managers have improved access to provision by enabling students to enrol on courses at various times throughout the year, particularly at foundation level. This has contributed to a reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Access to Train to Gain provision is also possible throughout the year. Good arrangements are in place to gather the views of those employers with whom the college is already engaged. The systematic gathering of views from other employers and the arrangements for gathering students' views are not fully developed. A large and increasing number of students benefit from a good and well resourced enrichment programme. Enrichment relates closely to the Every Child Matters themes and helps raise students' expectations and ambition.

21. Partnership working is good. The college has a wide range of partnerships which focus specifically on the needs of the local community and industry. They are particularly concerned with helping people to gain employability skills. The college has developed some highly effective links with local organisations to ensure that the needs of young people, particularly those with barriers to overcome such as looked after children, are met. Partnerships with local schools are good, although the extensive provision for local pupils has contracted due to a lower than expected enrolment on diploma courses. Teachers increase students' awareness of sustainable development very effectively. For example, the cooperation between the land-based and catering areas is good and reduces food miles.

22. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Managers organise the prompt provision of information, advice and guidance effectively. Students obtain a broad range of information through taster days, open evenings and a common, local post-16 application system. Staff ensure that most students are on appropriate courses, although this was not always the case in 2009/10. Staff arrange induction to meet the needs of particular groups, and it helps students to settle quickly into college life. Students receive good support. Counsellors and personal development coordinators provide effective personal support. Students with specific learning difficulties receive good support throughout their courses. Managers evaluate the impact of additional learning support rigorously, and it is highly effective. Tutorial provision is satisfactory. Managers have made significant changes to tutorial arrangements recently to address concerns that tutorials were ineffective. It is too early to judge their impact but in-year retention and attendance data indicate significant improvements compared with the same time last year.

Leadership and management   Grade 3

23. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governors and senior leadership team have a clear vision with a very strong focus on inclusivity, partnership working, and meeting the needs of the local community. This vision is shared by all staff. The new principal has settled quickly into her role. Strategic objectives link logically to the vision and operating plans of the college. Staff are well qualified and benefit from good professional development. Managers set realistic but challenging targets at all levels within the college. They did not, however, achieve all their success rate targets in 2009/10. Managers have implemented strategies to deal with these concerns and, although it is too early to judge their full impact, early indications are positive. Managers are aware of the need to continue to develop a culture of high aspirations in staff and students.

24. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a good knowledge of the college context and a relevant breadth of skills, which enable them to carry out their statutory duties effectively. They are aware of the key priorities of the college and work with senior staff to help develop the strategic direction and objectives. Governors display high levels of financial understanding and monitor this aspect very thoroughly. Their monitoring of student performance is less strong but is in development.

25. Staff give safeguarding a very high priority and embed it effectively in all areas. Students feel very safe and are clear on how they can gain help and support. The comprehensive single central record shows that managers have completed the appropriate checks on staff, governors and volunteers. Training for staff is effective. Risk management is robust and covers individuals, facilities and activities. Staff promote health and safety thoroughly. Policies and procedures are detailed and they clearly outline the measures taken to ensure the well-being of young people and vulnerable adults. A senior manager has responsibility for safeguarding and liaises with a nominated governor effectively. The extensive links with external agencies are well developed and enhance the support available to students, particularly the most vulnerable.

26. The promotion of equality and diversity is strong. The single equality scheme covers all necessary legislation and the related action plans are wide ranging and effective. Training activities are well developed. Students respect each other and are aware that any forms of bullying or harassment are unacceptable. The college has a very strong focus on supporting the learning of groups who have been disengaged from learning. The college monitors the achievement of different groups of students thoroughly. Students who receive additional learning support achieve better than their peers who do not receive support. The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum in most areas is good.

27. Strategies to engage students and employers in the decision-making process of the college are satisfactory. The 'learner voice and influence group' plays a key role in obtaining students' views across all areas and in ensuring that students receive a response. Managers are aware, however, of the need to increase and improve work in this area such as promoting students' membership of committees. The new 'Services to Business' unit is improving the gathering and use of employers' views but its full impact has yet to be realised.

28. Self-assessment and quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Managers in construction and key skills have used self-assessment and quality assurance processes very effectively to support improvements. This is not the case, however, across all the provision and success rates on advanced level provision for students aged 16 to 18 have been low for several years. Managers have recently clarified and strengthened the quality assurance arrangements. They have increased the emphasis on critical evaluation in self-assessment. The reliability of management information has improved and managers use data more effectively to analyse and monitor performance.

29. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources range from satisfactory to excellent. Managers use finances to good effect to improve accommodation and resources. They have taken students' views into account when considering improvements, for example, in planning for the new building. Managers give sustainability a strong focus. Staff and students are involved in a wide range of schemes to support developments in sustainability, including the recycling of many materials.

Subject areas

Health, social care and childcare   Grade 3

Context

30. Full-time and part-time courses are available from foundation to advanced levels. Of 730 students, approximately 380 are aged 16 to 18, 450 are full-time and nearly 86% are female. Approximately 80 students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Part-time and full-time work-based qualifications are available at intermediate and advanced levels. Most of the 280 work-based students are employed and three quarters are female. Approximately 20 students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About 260 students are on Train to Gain programmes and 18 are on apprenticeship programmes.

Key findings

■   Success and retention rates for students on college-based courses are very low. Most current students are making satisfactory progress. Key skills success rates have improved and are above average.

■   NVQ success rates and the proportion of students achieving in the expected time are very high, especially at levels 2 and 3. Success rates for Train to Gain students are also very high. Current students on Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes make good progress towards achieving their learning goals. Students produce high quality work.

■   Students enjoy learning. Current college attendance and retention data are much higher than at the same time the previous year. All students feel safe, both within the college and while on placements. Staff give good attention to ensuring that students develop safe working practices.

■   Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, students gain confidence, make rapid progress and enjoy a wide range of motivating activities. They demonstrate learning through good discussions and accurate responses to probing questions. Teachers' use of ILT is insufficient however, target setting in individual learning plans is weak. Feedback on assessed work varies significantly.

■   Training and assessment of students on Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes are very effective. They support and extend students' understanding of professional practice.

■   Students have access to a wide range of provision and many progress to higher level courses. The types and levels of courses delivered meet the needs of employers effectively. Students and staff benefit from highly productive partnership arrangements. Progression rates to appropriate employment, promotion, training, and further and higher education are high.

- Support for students is satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is good. Students value the flexible and approachable manner of teachers and assessors highly. Employers are aware of students' progress and achievements and they support them well. Additional learning support is effective in helping students learn and develop confidence. Initial advice and guidance and recruitment and selection practices have improved and are satisfactory.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Training and development are effective in supporting staff in their roles. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Management information systems are satisfactory and course teams use data effectively to monitor performance. These teams share a common goal to achieve high standards for their students but their sharing of good practice is underdeveloped.

- The arrangements to safeguard students are very good. Staff use both preventative and proactive approaches to safeguarding and health and safety which support risk assessment and risk management very effectively.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good and staff embed these aspects thoroughly in the curriculum. Students have a very clear understanding of relevant equality and diversity issues which impact on their own professional practice and on the lives of their clients.

- Self-assessment is satisfactory. The process is inclusive and managers base their judgements on relevant evidence. The identification of strengths and areas for improvement is accurate but managers give insufficient emphasis to the latter. Graded judgements are over-optimistic in a few areas as they are in a minority of internal lesson observations.

- Managers have recently taken action to address areas of concern, such as more effective monitoring of students' attendance, retention and progress, and improved action planning, individual learning plans and tutorials. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these initiatives although current attendance and retention rates are higher than at the same time last year.

What does Rotherham College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

- Increase retention rates on courses for students aged 16 to 18 by improving the effectiveness of information, advice and guidance to ensure that each student is on the most appropriate course at the most appropriate level.

- Improve teaching and learning by using more challenging targets, providing feedback which consistently informs students how they can improve and by increasing the use of ILT to support learning.

- Ensure the consistent implementation of the quality improvement initiatives by frequent monitoring at course team level to measure the impact on students' attendance, retention and success rates.

Engineering   Grade 2

Context

31. Full-time and part-time courses are available from foundation level to level 4. Of approximately 1,400 students, 900 are aged 16 to 18 and 280 are full-time. About 40 students are female and 90 are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Part-time work-based qualifications are available at levels 2 and 3. Of 180 work-based students, 74 are aged 16 to 18, 172 are on apprenticeship programmes and 8 are on Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

■ Success rates are satisfactory. Most are close to the national averages. A few success rates are consistently low, such as on the full-time national certificate in electrical/electronic engineering. Key skills success rates are high. Apprenticeship success rates are low but are improving significantly. Many apprentices do not complete their programme due to poor external economic circumstances.

■ Students' progress is good. College-based students develop relevant vocational and practical skills. Work-based students produce high standards of work in their reports and often progress to working with minimum supervision in their workplace. Students aged 16 to 18 make very good progress on advanced level courses relative to their entry qualifications. Attendance and punctuality on college-based courses are good.

■ Teaching and learning are good. In practical lessons teachers monitor students' progress closely and provide clear guidance on how they can improve their skills. In theory lessons teachers make good links with practical applications so that students understand the relevance of the theoretical concepts. Teachers make insufficient use however, of directed questions, to check students' learning and understanding.

■ Teachers do not use ILT to best effect. In a good lesson, a teacher used ILT very effectively to enliven the topic but often teachers make insufficient use of the facilities available to provide more stimulating presentations. They do not always make good use of the intranet to provide teaching material for students who are absent.

■ Assessment is good. Teachers mark work accurately. Teachers identify areas for improvement which often lead to higher standards of students' work. The management of internal verification is adequate.

■ Teachers use individual learning plans appropriately for college-based students to identify areas for improvement. Progress reviews for work-based students occur regularly and are productive. They ensure students keep up-to-date. The good relationships between reviewers and employers ensure that students make good progress on their NVQ courses.

■ The wide range of courses closely matches the needs of students and employers across several vocational areas including motor vehicle and electrical installation. Curriculum specialisms, such as operations and maintenance and materials technology, support local high technology and specialised companies. The curriculum is responsive to students' and employers' needs.

■ The good links with industry benefit students considerably. Visits to local companies help them understand the work they are undertaking. Staff work very closely with many major local companies and work-based training providers from which 300 additional students attend the college. Employers are very positive about the work of the college.

■ Arrangements to recruit and induct students are effective. Staff make good use of the enrichment team to provide anti-bullying workshops closely matched to the needs of particular tutor groups. Specialised support for students with particular disabilities, such as hearing impairment, is good.

■ Leadership and management are good. Course team management is good. Managers have implemented effective actions to improve the quality of provision and success rates. The self-assessment report is accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified.

■ Resources are good. Some are of a very high quality, such as the modern manufacturing workshop and associated control equipment, and the motor vehicle facilities at Rother Valley. Other facilities are suitable and provide an appropriate range of equipment. Teachers are knowledgeable. NVQ assessors are well qualified.

■ Staff promote health and safety strongly. They frequently reinforce relevant aspects during lessons and progress reviews. Students feel safe and wear appropriate personal and protective clothing. The number of female engineering teachers has increased significantly but teachers do not include equality and diversity sufficiently in lessons. Work-based students' progress forms make few references to equality and diversity issues.

What does Rotherham College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

■ Increase success rates by monitoring students' progress more rigorously.

■ Facilitate students' learning and understanding by increasing and improving the use of ILT and by monitoring their progress through individual questioning.

■ Promote equality and diversity more widely and fully by extending current curriculum and work-based activities to improve students' awareness.

Visual and performing arts   Grade 2

Context

32. Approximately 480 students are on visual and performing arts courses which range from foundation level to foundation degree level. Nearly 90% attend full-time and most of these are aged 16 to 18. Nearly 60% are female. Six per cent of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In addition to their main courses, students take GCSEs in art or graded examinations in singing and playing.

Key findings

■   Success rates are high on most courses, although many declined in 2009/10. Students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses make satisfactory progress compared with their prior attainment. Current retention rates are high. Attendance is high and punctuality is good.

■   Students' work is of a high standard. Students develop a good work ethic and a professional approach to practical activities. They gain good personal, social and employability skills. Students demonstrate a sound understanding of complex processes and terminology and use technical language accurately.

■   Students make a very positive contribution to the community. For example, they visit schools to promote college courses, create and present workshops to promote equality and diversity in local businesses, produce murals for a hospital and help promote the local anti-bullying week.

■   Teaching and learning are good. Teachers start lessons with a clear introduction and conclude with a good review of the learning outcomes. They make good use of a wide variety of techniques and use ILT effectively. In a few lessons teachers fail to engage all students. The variety of learning activities is insufficient. Assessment is rigorous. Teachers provide detailed and constructive feedback.

■   A wide range of full-time courses is available from entry level through to foundation degree, providing good progression opportunities both within, and across, specialist subject areas. Many students make good progress from intermediate level to degree level courses.

■   Accommodation and equipment are very good. Equipment and resources in the music and recording academy are outstanding. A few studios suffer from external noise. Students use the well resourced learning centre effectively. The range and scale of the three dimensional work in a ceramics area are limited by use from other areas of the college.

■   Staff have developed good partnership links with several local and international companies which have resulted in enhanced learning areas, up-to-date equipment, and master-class training sessions for staff and students. Local

police and fire services provide staff and resources to create good opportunities for realistic work experience projects.

■ Prospective students receive good pre-course advice and guidance and a thorough induction. Entry requirements are fair and inclusive and teachers assess the quality of students' work at interview thoroughly. Additional learning support is very effective and is available in most lessons, in workshops and in the dedicated learning centre.

■ Leadership and management are good. Course team management is good. The self-assessment process involves all staff. The report is thorough and accurate, and leads to improvements. Financial management is good.

■ The promotion of equality, diversity and respect in teaching sessions is effective. Mutual respect exists between students and teachers. The approach to safeguarding is good. The arrangements for health and safety are rigorous.

What does Rotherham College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

■ Improve success rates and the proportion of students achieving high grades by monitoring their retention and progress more closely.

■ Embed ILT throughout all areas to support learning by sharing good practice and ensuring sufficient access to information and communication technology resources.

■ Ensure that all students are involved in lessons by using a wide range of interesting activities and by including tasks which are sufficiently challenging for the more able students.

Literacy, numeracy, key skills and ESOL   Grade 3

Context

33. Approximately 3,000 students are on either discrete or embedded programmes following full-time and part-time courses in literacy, numeracy, functional skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), from foundation to intermediate levels. Nearly 1,850 of these students are aged 16 to 18 and most of them are full-time. Just over half of the students are female. A significant number of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Approximately 420 students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Most ESOL courses have high success rates. Success rates in adult numeracy are satisfactory on entry and level 2 courses but have been very low on level 1 for several years. Students are highly motivated to achieve their aims which may be to gain skills for employment and life rather than qualifications.

- In ESOL and functional skills lessons, students develop good knowledge, understanding, and skills relevant to their economic and social well-being through contextualised learning and programmes specifically designed to prepare them for life after college.

- Progression for students is good. They access a range of internal progression routes and move on to other relevant courses both within the curriculum area and within mainstream provision. A few students progress to higher education.

- Students feel very safe. They know relevant key personnel and procedures and how to access support if necessary. The standard of behaviour in classrooms is good. Students enjoy their lessons. Safe working practices are evident in classrooms and workshop areas. Teachers know their students well. Good staff-student rapport and a culture of mutual respect are evident in lessons.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers involve students in learning effectively. Students participate fully and extend their knowledge and understanding. In less effective lessons, students are over-reliant on their teachers. They do not receive sufficient challenge and make slow progress.

- All students undergo initial and diagnostic assessments. On foundation, functional skills and ESOL courses teachers use these assessments effectively and link them to individual learning plans and targets to enable students to progress and achieve. Teachers of adult literacy and numeracy however, do not use the assessment effectively to inform individual learning plans. Targets are not specific or measurable.

- Assessment is satisfactory. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Many teachers provide verbal feedback during lessons which supports students'

progress. Their written feedback however, is often insufficiently constructive. Assessment for learning is underdeveloped. Assessment in most observed lessons was carried out by teachers and opportunities for peer and self-assessment were missed.

■ The range and context of provision are good and provide a wide choice of subjects and levels with good progression routes from foundation to higher level courses. The provision is relevant to the needs of local communities. It enables students to undertake their courses at an appropriate level to underpin their vocational options.

■ Partnerships are good. Many community links exist between the college and schools, charitable organisations and National Health Service trusts. The curriculum enables those underrepresented in learning to access a wide choice of courses at different levels. Partner organisations express high levels of satisfaction with the provision.

■ Care, guidance and support are good. The liaison between curriculum staff and information, advice and guidance staff is effective. Personal development coordinators provide specific pastoral support to ESOL students. Staff identify students' needs appropriately, and learning support is targeted and effective. However, the independent learning skills of a small number of students who receive too much support are underdeveloped.

■ Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders place trust in curriculum managers to develop the provision. Staff promote equality and diversity effectively, including the ethos of community cohesion. Managers at all levels are aware of the need to raise levels of success. The self-assessment report is accurate. Managers do not monitor the quality of individual learning plans and lesson plans sufficiently.

■ Resources are satisfactory. Paper-based resources are extensive and appropriate to age, qualification aim, and level. Teachers use an adequate range of web-based resources. They have recently introduced a useful interactive resource that links diagnostic assessment to learning materials. The provision of ILT resources in classrooms to aid learning is poor.

What does Rotherham College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

■ Improve retention, particularly in numeracy provision for disengaged students aged 16 to 18, through closer monitoring of the choice of students' courses.

■ Improve and monitor the effectiveness of individual learning plans through the sharing of good practice in developing specific, measurable and achievable targets clearly linked to diagnostic assessment.

■ Encourage teachers to use a broader range of assessment strategies, including more peer and self-assessment, through further staff development and the sharing of good practice.

Information about the inspection

34. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's assistant principal curriculum-standards as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

35. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students and employers. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

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	2,521	0	1,811	710	0
Part-time learners	3,384	255	561	1,687	881
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
*Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?**	3				
*How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?**	3				
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
*How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?**	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?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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