

# Furness College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130633

**Name of lead inspector:** Heather Barnett, HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 10 December 2010

**Type of provider:** General Further Education College

**Address:** Channelside  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA14 2PJ

**Telephone number:** 01229 825017

## Information about the provider

1. Furness College is a general further education college situated in the industrial and relatively isolated town of Barrow-in-Furness. The college occupies a single, purpose-built campus close to the town centre. Within its catchment area a number of other providers are offering post-16 provision. The mission directing the work of the college is to "provide an exceptional environment for the people of Furness to reach their full potential by improving their knowledge, skills and vocational qualifications through the delivery of high quality courses in all curriculum areas".
2. Barrow district is in the most deprived 10% of districts in England with deprivation problems relating to health, employment, income, child poverty and education. Around 49.5% of residents are male and the number of ethnic minority residents is 2%, which has shown a slight increase in recent years. In Cumbria in 2009, the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving five GCSEs grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was around 50% which is in line with the national average. In Barrow there are large variations in success rates across the different schools.
3. In 2009/10 the college recruited around 4,550 learners. Over 3,500 of these learners studied on Skills Funding Agency/Young People's Learning Agency funded programmes, 52% of which were male and approximately 2% were from minority ethnic groups. Just over 1,000 funded learners were on full-time courses, the majority of whom were aged 16 to 18. The college also offers apprenticeships, Train to Gain courses and higher education (HE) provision for full-time and part-time learners. In 2009/10 provision was offered across 13 sector subject areas, covering entry level to higher education in most areas, with the highest proportion of learners on courses at intermediate and advanced level. The subject area with the highest number of enrolments was preparation for life and work.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - BAE Systems – Employer responsive provision
  - Gen II – Employer responsive provision
  - Kimberly Clark – Employer responsive provision

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10</b>
<p><b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning</p>	<p>176 part-time learners</p> <p>757 full-time learners 73 part-time learners</p> <p>30 full-time learners 226 part-time learners</p>
<p><b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)</p>	<p>254 full-time learners 895 part-time learners</p>
<p><b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>670 learners 376 apprentices</p>

## 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>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<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, care and early years	3
Engineering	2

## Overall effectiveness

5. Furness College is a good college which has a clear focus on meeting the needs of its learners and the local community. It is a friendly environment where learners of different ages and from different backgrounds feel welcomed and supported. Outcomes for learners are good, with success rates increasing significantly in the last year. However, the college is aware that further improvements are needed in some areas, such as on foundation level provision and for work based learners to achieve their qualification in the given timescale.
6. The quality of provision is good. The wide range of relevant provision, combined with strong support and guidance, ensure learners are placed on courses well suited to their needs and that they are supported effectively throughout their course and on to the next step in their career. The outstanding partnership working enhances the provision and learners' experiences are tailored to meet their needs and to develop their skills. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some very effective practice but this is not seen consistently across all areas. The college recognises the need to increase the proportion of good and better sessions. Assessment practice is variable and does not always support learners to improve their work. The use and setting of targets is also variable. The college is aware of these issues and is developing strategies to address them.

7. Leadership and management are good. Strong strategic leadership and governance are clearly focused on meeting the needs of the area and supporting its regeneration. Equality and diversity are promoted well; no groups of learners underachieve and the college is a very welcoming community for all learners. Safeguarding is good. Health and safety are promoted well in the college and the workplace. The views of learners, employers and other interested groups are used effectively to support improvement. Self-assessment processes are thorough and fully understood by staff but further work is needed to ensure all processes are co-ordinated and ensuing actions are monitored more effectively.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates have improved significantly for learners over the last year, particularly at advanced level and are now above average. There are minimal variations in the achievement of different groups of learners. Success rates in a few areas are below average, such as some courses at foundation level.
- Learners make good progress in their skills development, both personal and vocational. They enjoy their studies and behave well. There have been significant improvements in work based learning success rates. However, the proportion of learners achieving their qualification within the agreed timescale needs to improve further.
- Learners' awareness of health and well-being is promoted effectively. Participation rates in health-related activities are good and feedback from learners is positive. Learners make a valuable contribution to a range of local community activities and those farther afield.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, learners enjoy being challenged by inspirational activities and they make rapid progress. Each learner is involved in learning new skills. In the less effective lessons, teachers dominate proceedings and do not check learners' understanding. Learners make slow progress and produce work of a low standard.
- Assessment and feedback to learners are very variable. In the best cases, teachers provide clear briefs and grade criteria. They mark learners' work carefully and write constructive feedback. In other examples, teachers make grammatical and spelling errors in assignment briefs and feedback and do not mark learners' work rigorously. Feedback is brief and does not aid improvement.
- The quality and usefulness of individual learning plans and target-setting are variable. In the best examples, the plan is detailed and the targets are helpful and personalised. In the less effective cases, the plan is brief, targets are too general and learners are not advised how to meet their objectives.
- Staff use the college's outstanding partnerships to meet the needs and interests of employers and learners very effectively. They promote educational and social inclusion and community cohesion very successfully by adapting provision to

meet specific local needs. They work very effectively with other agencies to promote sustainability and local regeneration.

- There is good initial advice, guidance and induction for learners. Additional learning support is comprehensive and it impacts positively on learners' success and progression. The tutorial process is satisfactory. Staff provide high levels of care and support for all learners which helps them achieve their goals.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. Senior leaders have a strong strategic focus on meeting the needs of the local area and on encouraging learners from a range of backgrounds to come to college. Management structures have been developed to increase accountability and flexibility, as has the curriculum offer.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Safeguarding has a very high priority in the college and in workplaces. Learners feel very safe. Appropriate staff training is carried out and learners' awareness is raised effectively. Risk management is robust. Health and safety are strongly promoted. There is good use of information and learning technology (ILT) with a strong focus on e-safety.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college provides a safe and supportive environment for its learners. It analyses data effectively and puts effective strategies in place to deal with any achievement gaps. Good opportunities have been created to gain opinions and feedback from users.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory. Quality Assurance processes are in place and they are understood and used by staff. However, self-assessment is insufficiently evaluative and does not have a clear focus on the use of targets to raise standards. Further work is needed on monitoring actions to assess their impact.

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

- Improve those success rates which are below the national average, such as those on foundation programmes, and increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualification within the agreed timescale in work based learning by embedding effective target-setting for learners, and rigorous monitoring across all areas.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by fully involving all learners in a wide range of interesting activities which meet their differing needs. Increase the emphasis on challenging all learners to reach higher standards and on checking their understanding.
- Improve the quality of assignment briefs, grade criteria, marking and feedback to enable learners to understand what is required of them and how to improve the presentation and content of their assessments.
- Improve the quality and relevance of learners' targets in their individual learning plans so that they know how best to achieve their own short-term aims and how to overcome their own barriers to progress and successful attainment.

- Improve the quality of self-assessment by ensuring a more focused and consistent approach to target-setting throughout the process and a greater evaluation of actions to assess their impact on learners.

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

#### **What learners like:**

- the friendly atmosphere
- the welcoming environment for all learners
- the very good support
- the strong focus on health and safety
- the work related focus of their studies
- their good relationships with staff
- the working environment and facilities
- how their views are listened to and the differences they make.

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

- access to food in certain buildings
- information technology access and reliability, at some times, in some areas
- the temperature in some buildings.

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

#### **What employers like:**

- helpful college staff
- how well learners are looked after
- preparation for further courses
- the flexibility and responsiveness of the provision
- very strong communication and support
- the good progress of learners
- their good relationship with the college.

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

- the administration of the national vocational qualification (NVQ) when key staff are absent
- the employer involvement in discussing some employees' progress
- the pro-activity of college staff.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

8. The college demonstrates a good capacity to improve. Success rates on college based programmes have increased significantly in the last year, particularly on advanced level provision. Success rates for work based programmes have improved by 20% over the last three years, although from a low base. Most learners make good progress in achieving their qualification. The college has a clear vision for its future, which is based firmly on meeting local and regional needs. It has effectively addressed most of the areas for improvement from the last inspection and is planning to address the points that remain. Processes for self-assessment are embedded and understood by staff, although reporting is insufficiently evaluative. The college is working on strategies to ensure greater consistency in target-setting and monitoring across all areas. The plans for the new college building reflect the ambitions that the management team and governors have for the college, and their high levels of financial management. There is a strong staff commitment to produce a high quality experience for all learners.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

9. Outcomes for learners are good. There was a significant increase in the long-course success rate for learners in 2009/10 and current data show this trend has continued in 2010/11. In 2008/09 the overall success rate on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 was broadly in line with the national average. It was above the national average on foundation programmes and below on intermediate and advanced courses. In 2009/10 the success rate on advanced level provision, where there are most learners, rose significantly to a high level and well above the national average. The success rate on intermediate programmes rose to around the national average. On foundation programmes the success rate fell, but data to-date for 2010/11 show a positive impact of intervention strategies in this area.
10. For adult learners, success rates, which were around the national average in 2007/08, declined at all levels to below the comparable national average in 2008/09. This trend was reversed in 2009/10. Success rates rose by more than 15% on advanced programmes, where there are most learners, and also rose significantly on intermediate courses to above the comparable national rate. Success rates on foundation provision remained low, but actions taken to address issues already show a positive impact in 2010/11.
11. Key skills success rates have been well above the national average for a number of years and remained so in 2009/10, with particularly strong success rates on intermediate courses. Success rates for young apprentices are very high. There are strongly improving success rates for the apprenticeship provision, which have risen by 20% from a low base over three years and are now at the



national average for the overall success rate. The rate at which apprentices achieve their qualification within the agreed timescale has also improved significantly to the national average. For Train to Gain provision, the overall success rate was high and well above the national average in 2009/10. However, the success rate within the agreed timescale was below the national average.

12. The college analyses the achievement of different learner groups well and there are no trends of continuing underperformance. The college has implemented effective strategies to address any variations that are seen. There was a difference in the achievement of male and female learners aged 16 to 18 in 2008/09, with men doing better than women, but that was no longer the case in 2009/10. There has been a difference in the success rates for adult learners receiving additional learning support, with these learners achieving less well than their peers but this difference was reduced in 2009/10. There are no patterns of underachievement related to learners from different ethnic groups, apart from a small group of adult Chinese learners, where provision has now been adapted to ensure more positive outcomes.
13. Learners' good progress is apparent when the qualifications they obtain are compared with their entry qualifications. Learners develop very high levels of vocational and personal skills in most areas. There are examples of individuals overcoming significant barriers to learning to succeed in their studies, such as those on Prince's Trust courses. Progression rates to higher levels of learning and employment are generally good. Learners enjoy their studies, behave well and work well in teams.
14. Very effective processes are in place to ensure that health, safety and safeguarding are well embedded in the college and the curriculum. Learners feel very safe in college and in their workplaces. Incidents of bullying, abuse and harassment are rare and dealt with effectively. Healthy lifestyles are successfully promoted around college, in tutorials and as part of some courses. There is a range of health and well-being activities with good participation rates and positive feedback from learners. The college has recently achieved 'Healthy College' status. Learners participate in a wide range of local and international community and fund raising activities. There is an active student council.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

15. Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Too many lessons are satisfactory. In the best lessons, learners make good progress and are challenged very effectively. They develop good communication skills and work very productively as teams. The use of ILT and visual aids help learners understand new topics very successfully. Learners enjoy participating in a wide range of interesting activities which are designed to ensure that all learners are included, whatever their abilities. In the less effective lessons, learners make slow progress and they work at a lower level than expected. Learners of all abilities work for the same length of time, on the same tasks and the more able learners receive insufficient challenge. The questioning of learners is

underdeveloped. Teachers do not probe sufficiently and do not ensure that checking of learning includes all learners.

16. The use of ILT and the virtual learning environment (VLE) is satisfactory. College strategies, protocols and staff development emphasise the importance of the effective use of ILT, but implementation and usefulness vary. The availability and use of ILT and VLE resources range from very good to underdeveloped. The speed of the information and communication technology systems is limited because of infrastructural problems in many parts of the college which are being fully addressed in the new build.
17. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners undergo initial and diagnostic assessments and the outcomes of these are used to ensure learners join the most appropriate course and level. Learners' target-setting is very variable. In the best examples, targets are clear and constructive and they address each individual learner's barriers to progress. In other cases, targets are too general and do not relate to each individual learner's needs. Formal reviews of individual learning plans and targets are infrequent. Internal verification is satisfactory. The policy is good but its implementation is inconsistent in the quality of assignment setting, marking and feedback. In the best cases, teachers set clear assignment briefs and grading criteria. They mark work appropriately and provide good, supportive formative feedback which helps learners to improve. In the less effective examples, teachers do not correct spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors even when these distort learners' intended meanings. Assignment briefs and feedback also contain spelling and grammatical errors.
18. The internal lesson observation process is satisfactory. Teachers find the experience helpful to improve their teaching practice and to improve learners' experiences. Lesson observation outcomes inform the appraisal and staff development systems. Managers moderate all the observation outcomes and change judgements appropriately but they do not analyse them by groups of learners or by level and type of lesson. In a significant minority of lesson observations, grades awarded do not correlate with key findings and observers make over-optimistic judgements.
19. The quality of provision to meet the needs of learners and employers is good. The range of provision is wide and the curriculum includes a significant number of work-related and HE courses. In a small minority of subject areas, however, full progression routes from foundation to advanced levels are not available. Staff have responded to the needs of those disengaged from learning, such as young people not in education, employment or training, by providing courses which interest them and help them gain qualifications or employment. These learners gain in self-confidence, responsibility, self-awareness and maturity and learn how to become good citizens. Staff have responded to employers' needs by amending the content, location, timing, duration and type of delivery. Managers promote a strong focus on improving learners' employability and enterprise skills. Many learners use 'live' briefs to ensure their work is closely related to employers' needs. The range of cross-college enrichment activities is

wide and participation is high. Many of these activities relate closely to the Every Child Matters (ECM) themes and to employability.

20. The college has outstanding, well established, diverse and extensive partnership arrangements. Managers collaborate closely and very effectively with the other Cumbrian colleges, local primary and secondary schools, universities, Connexions, The Prince's Trust and employers. They co-sponsor the local academy with a sixth form college and a university. They also collaborate very effectively with local agencies to provide education and training for looked after children, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, learners needing additional support and young people who are at risk of leaving education or who are not in education, employment or training. Young people aged 14 to 16 gain vocational, life and employability skills which they could not obtain from their schools alone. Through co-operation with local partners, managers promote robust educational and social inclusion practices. They often lead or play a key part in collaborative partnerships. Their links with the local fire and rescue and police services benefit learners greatly and relate well to the ECM themes. The college is involved in a waste consortium to promote sustainable waste management. Managers place a strong emphasis on sustainability and environmental technologies.
21. There is good initial advice, guidance and induction which prepare learners well for their course. Working arrangements with Connexions are good and schools' liaison staff visit schools regularly to provide information about courses. All learners are interviewed by curriculum specialists. An effective and comprehensive online initial screening system enables additional support to be identified and provided before courses commence. Additional learning support is comprehensive and well co-ordinated and it has a positive impact on learners' success and progression. Learners speak highly of the support they receive from specialist and curriculum staff.
22. The tutorial process is satisfactory. There is a sound online framework in place which is used across the college, including for apprenticeships. However, the processes used to monitor it, are not yet sufficiently rigorous. The learners' 'involvement strategy' is effective; feedback is taken seriously and the college responds well to addressing the concerns raised. Learners are fully supported by staff and this contributes to their high levels of satisfaction and improving achievement. Parents and employers receive regular reports on progress. Learners are prepared well for their next step to employment or further education or training. Good links with employers in many subject areas lead to work placement opportunities and employment.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

23. The college has a clear strategic plan. It is shared by staff and is moving the college forward effectively. The recently re-written plan better reflects the current position of the college and takes into account economic changes and changing government priorities. Senior leaders have restructured the management team to give greater responsibility to curriculum managers. The

college is very aware of its position in Cumbria and the need to develop the skills of the workforce and support regeneration of the area. For example, it has been involved in an initiative to develop skills to support offshore wind farms which will be a source of future employment.

24. Governors are well informed about issues that affect the college and are able to challenge and support managers effectively. Governors have a range of expertise and senior and influential positions in the local community, which support them well in their role. Local and regional needs are effectively met through good strategic planning and good partnership working with governors of the other Cumbrian colleges. An annual strategic planning event is held and the boards of all four Cumbrian colleges attend. All the governors have been trained in safeguarding and equality and diversity. They have responded positively and proactively to the challenges presented by funding and economic changes.
25. Safeguarding has a very high priority within the college and the workplace. Learners feel very safe, they are clear about how they can access help and can give examples of the positive impact of the support they have received. The college has a comprehensive single central record, showing all required checks on staff, governors and volunteers are carried out. Training for staff is highly effective and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Risk management is robust. Health and safety are promoted strongly in the college and workplace. Policies and procedures are detailed and clearly outline the measures taken to ensure the well-being of young people and vulnerable adults. College staff liaise well with external agencies. The college promotes e-safety strongly and uses the VLE very effectively to promote learners' understanding of many aspects of keeping safe.
26. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment for all learners. It organises a good range of activities to promote equality and diversity, including 'Diversity Week', where learners engage in a number of multi-cultural and community activities. Learners are encouraged to consider the 'Respect' value which is well-embedded in many enrichment activities. The college has developed a Single Equality Scheme which is being implemented across all areas. There is good analysis of achievement data for different groups and effective strategies are put in place to address any gaps found. There is some active promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning but this is not applied consistently across all areas. The college plays a major role in encouraging learners from a range of backgrounds to re-engage with learning and it has ensured that its curriculum has been redesigned to meet their specific needs.
27. A range of processes is used to collect users' feedback. There are learners' forum groups in each department in addition to online surveys. Employer forums meet regularly. Good analysis of this feedback information takes place at curriculum level and responses to learners are systematically followed up. For example, poor lighting in the car park at night was raised by learners; this was

dealt with quickly and resolved. At present, learners' feedback is not analysed at minority group level although there are plans to do this in the future.

28. The self-assessment process is well informed by a termly curriculum audit process. As part of this process, curriculum managers carry out teaching and learning observations. They then organise a good range of development activities. These activities support the overall training plan, clearly ensuring that development activities are specifically linked to strategic direction and priorities. The self-assessment process has two stages: cross-college and curriculum area level. The system is thoroughly embedded and understood by staff. Although performance data, including lists of targets, are available and weekly monitoring reports are produced by curriculum areas, the data are not systematically used to formulate specific and measurable targets in the curriculum audit reports. The college recognises that the target-setting data exist in different forms across the college and in different systems. The self-assessment report and quality improvement plan have generic and/or narrative actions which are not focused on targets. Plans exist to address these issues and to ensure there is more effective evaluation of actions taken and to determine their impact on learners and the college's improvements.
29. The College has sound financial processes and maintains good financial controls. It has planned to take into account the impact of the new build on its future financial stability and is currently establishing a range of processes to make in-year cost efficiencies. Staff utilisation levels are high. Teachers, assessors and functional skills staff are appropriately qualified. The new build has been designed to give more flexible and cost effective learning space.

## Subject areas

### Health, care and early years

### Grade 3

#### Context

30. The college offers courses from entry to higher education levels in health, social care and early years. Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes are also offered. On college-based provision there are 115 learners in care and early years and 106 in health and social care. Fifty-four learners are currently enrolled on Train to Gain programmes and an apprenticeship programme has recently been reintroduced.

#### Key findings

- Success rates are good and improving on most programmes, including those at foundation and advanced level, and NVQ programmes. In 2009/10, at intermediate level, success rates were good and improving for adult learners but were low and declining for 16 to 18 year olds. Overall success rates on Train to Gain are good and improving.
- Standards of work are satisfactory. Learners usually make good progress in their assignment work and workplace skills are well developed for those on work experience and NVQ programmes. However, some learners are behind their targets. The development of independent learning and communication skills is underdeveloped and learners are not being prepared sufficiently for study at university level.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Activities are not always differentiated sufficiently to challenge or support individuals. Learners do not fully engage in activities to develop their independent learning and communication skills and they rely too heavily on tutors' support with tasks and assignments. Some learning materials and assessors' feedback contain spelling and grammatical errors.
- Learners undertake their assessment tasks enthusiastically, finding them interesting. However, assessment feedback does not sufficiently encourage them to improve their academic writing or their literacy. At times, the assessment of work does not develop learners' literacy skills as it is incorrectly marked. Some NVQ portfolios contain a narrow range of evidence with an over-reliance on written work and direct observation.
- Internal verification does not effectively improve the quality of assessment feedback. The processes are insufficiently rigorous with little forward planning or rationale for sampling. Few actions are identified to improve assessment practice and the monitoring of required improvements is insufficient. On NVQ programmes, the internal verification of observations and portfolios takes place regularly.

- Learners value their work placements highly and they have a very good choice of experiences due to the links with employers, schools and nurseries. Partnership working is good. The experiences help to improve learners' workplace skills and enthusiasm to learn. However, the collection and use of feedback from employers and work placement providers is limited.
- Support for learners has improved. Monitoring of attendance and progress are more rigorous and learners receive more effective support where issues are identified. However, targets for attendance and progress are not always set and where they are some learners have little awareness of them. Additional learning support helps to improve learners' assignment work but it does not always focus enough on improving wider skills.
- Initial advice and guidance are good and the college has taken steps to ensure that learners are on the correct course at the right level. In health and social care and on NVQ programmes, progression advice and guidance help learners make informed decisions about HE and careers. However, there is further work to do in this area in care and early years.
- Performance management has improved significantly; staff now have a satisfactory understanding of the need to improve success rates. However, tutors are not sufficiently aware of the targets set for their own courses and in some cases individual course targets have not been set. Good improvements to the curriculum offer have been made to meet learners' needs more successfully and the entry criteria are more stringently applied.
- Learners' and tutors' awareness of safeguarding is good. Tutors feel well equipped to identify and report safeguarding issues and learners have a very good awareness of reporting procedures. Some learners have reported issues directly to the safeguarding officer and have been well supported. Most safeguarding procedures are clear and well embedded
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. In some lessons, equality and diversity are promoted well and learners' discussion is encouraged. However, learners' perceptions about what constitutes discrimination are not always challenged sufficiently and opportunities to raise awareness of aspects are often missed. Efforts to increase the recruitment of males to this curriculum area are satisfactory.
- Self-assessment is inclusive and detailed and it accurately identifies some areas for improvement. However, it does not sufficiently focus on the impact on learners. Tutors have a limited understanding of what they need to do to improve further. Although observation of the teaching and learning process has identified much satisfactory teaching and learning, reports do not sufficiently focus on learning and learners' progress and there is little rigour in monitoring the impact of actions for improvement.

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

- Improve success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on intermediate level courses by ensuring that managers and tutors monitor the progress of learners regularly, providing support where required.

- Improve teaching and learning to ensure that all learners are sufficiently challenged and are developing independent learning skills. Provide support for tutors to develop these aspects of learning and monitor the impact of the support, with regular observations that focus on learning and learners' progress.
- Improve assessment practices to ensure that all learners receive sufficient feedback about the quality of their work to help them to improve. Develop a more rigorous approach to internal verification and ensure that identified actions are closely monitored.



## Engineering

## Grade 2

### Context

31. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in engineering from foundation to degree level. Of the 611 learners currently enrolled on learner-responsive provision, 195 are adults and 416 are aged 16 to 18. There are 242 learners following full-time courses and 369 following part-time courses. Participation levels show 15% of learners are female and 1% are from minority ethnic groups. Work based learning provision in engineering is offered in manufacturing, electrical/electronic and motor vehicle, covering Train to Gain courses and apprenticeships. In addition, there are 12 young apprentices.

### Key findings

- Overall success rates are high. Success rates on college based programmes are outstanding; they are at very high levels and well above the national average. The overall framework achievement rate for apprenticeships is good, especially at advanced level, although too many adult apprentices fail to complete in the agreed time. Train to Gain success rates are below the national average.
- Learners show good development of employability skills. A range of additional units is arranged in conjunction with a large local employer to enhance employability skills. A range of enrichment includes; group trips and guest speakers from industry for tutorials. Work experience opportunities for full-time learners are limited in some areas.
- Learners are involved effectively in community projects. A project for the restoration of a Romanian orphanage is funded by recycling scrap copper wire. Learners complete a sponsored walk for local charities and act as ambassadors for visiting schools. The development of skills relevant to understanding community cohesion is actively encouraged.
- Teaching and learning are good, with clear lesson planning and shared objectives. In the better lessons, the supportive use of ILT enhances delivery and activities are introduced to stimulate learners' interest and promote a friendly learning environment. Staff provide learners with regular and constructive feedback following assignments. However, there is inconsistent use of questioning to check individual understanding.
- The provision is broad in range and it suits learners' needs. Programmes are available from foundation to degree level using part-time, full-time and block-release attendance modes. However, there is not a dedicated mechanical engineering programme below intermediate level. Part-time staff, with current industrial experience, are used effectively to develop learners' understanding of the area.
- Partnership arrangements are outstanding. Strong partnerships exist with a large local employer and secondary schools resulting in short bespoke training

programmes and the identification of specific unit delivery for apprenticeship frameworks. In addition, the college is delivering the young apprenticeship programme in motor vehicle.

- Guidance and support for learners are good. All applicants complete an aptitude test and diagnostic assessment before individual interviews to ensure compatibility with their chosen programme. Initial assessment is provided during a comprehensive induction and some learners are advised of the additional support that is available. Vocationally qualified staff provide additional support in practical workshops. Tutorials are effective and help monitor learners' progress towards targets.
- Leadership and management are good. Effective strategies exist for engagement with local employers and schools, and the department has achieved the training quality standard. The provision is well designed to meet the needs of the local community and industry. The self-assessment report identifies strengths and actions for improvement. There is an inconsistent approach to team meetings and minutes and actions are not always documented.
- Safeguarding is good and all learners feel very safe. All staff attend mandatory safeguarding training. Safeguarding is included in workplace reviews and learners display a clear understanding of it. Health and safety are promoted well. Learners demonstrate safe working practices and there is regular reinforcement of safety during workplace assessments. Regular checks are made of employers' premises and staff and learners use appropriate protective equipment during practical sessions.
- There is good reinforcement of equality and diversity. Assessors refer to equality and diversity in workplace reviews and all learners receive awareness training as part of the comprehensive induction process. Bespoke taster classes for females take place in schools and the proportion of female learners in engineering is now above average at 15%. Equality and diversity workbooks are used effectively for both apprentices and advanced apprentices during assessor visits.
- Employers and school representatives attend the college regularly to discuss training provision and curriculum development opportunities. Their involvement is used effectively to improve provision. Learners' focus groups meet to discuss issues which are recorded with responses to show the impact of actions taken. Employers confirm that the college is very responsive to their needs. For example, assessors work flexibly so they can visit when it is most appropriate.
- Staff manage resources very effectively. Resources for engineering training are generally good with access to ILT for supporting delivery in some classrooms. Workshops are clean, tidy and well organised, with a good range of tools and equipment. Some classrooms are equipped with digital projectors and supporting ILT facilities but overall, they are in need of refurbishment, which has been deliberately limited because of the new build.

**What does Furness College need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the proportion of learners on work based programmes who achieve their qualification within the agreed time by ensuring the strategies in place are effectively embedded and monitored.
- Increase the range of foundation level provision and broaden the programme of work experience to include all full-time learners, so that all learners have access to similar high level opportunities.
- Develop the use of directed questioning by teachers so that they check individual understanding more effectively during lessons.
- Ensure minutes of team meetings and actions arising are effectively recorded to support communication and enhance the monitoring of action plans.

## Information about the inspection

32. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, 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.
33. 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)**  
**Furness College**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer 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			804	257	
Part-time learners		103	12	364	495
<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>	2				
<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?	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?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>				
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>	2				
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?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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