

Birmingham Metropolitan College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130466

Name of lead inspector: Shaun Dillon HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

Address: Jennings Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B4 7PS

Telephone number: 0121 355 5671

Information about the provider

1. Birmingham Metropolitan College is a very large general further education college. It has three main campuses, one in the city centre, one in Great Barr and one in Sutton Coldfield. It has provision in the community and on employers' premises. The college was formed in August 2009 as a result of a merger between Sutton Coldfield and Matthew Boulton Colleges. Birmingham has three other general further education colleges, two sixth form colleges and 47 school sixth forms. The college's mission is 'To provide high quality education and training that is inclusive, and which matches and supports the needs of our diverse learners and the local and regional economy'.
2. The college has provision in 14 subject areas, the largest of which are preparation for life and work; business and administration; health, public services and care; and science and mathematics. Just over half of its learners are aged 16 to 18. Approximately 450 learners are on apprenticeship programmes and 1,260 on Train to Gain provision. Nearly two-thirds of college funding is from the Young People's Learning Agency.
3. Nearly two-thirds of learners are from disadvantaged areas. Approximately 56% of learners have a minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of female learners aged 16 to 18 is 46% and of adults is 52%. In Birmingham, the proportion of young people who gain five or more GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics is 54.9%, just below the national average of 55.2%.
4. Inspectors collected evidence from most parts of the college and inspected five subject areas in depth: learner-responsive provision in visual arts and media; and in literacy, numeracy, key/functional skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); learner-responsive and employer-responsive provision in health, social care and childcare; in engineering; and in accounting, finance and business management.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Stoke-on-Trent College
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Care First
 - Birmingham Institute for the Deaf
 - West Bromwich Albion Foundation
 - Construction Learning World
 - Nordic
 - Bright Learning Solutions
 - Lead
 - Evolve

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning</p>	<p>577 part-time learners</p> <p>6,804 full-time learners 1,533 part-time learners</p> <p>596 full-time learners 655 part-time learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)</p>	<p>2,131 full-time learners 8,593 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>5,028 learners 601 apprentices</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	Grade
Health, social care and childcare	3
Engineering and manufacturing	3
Visual arts and media	2
Literacy, numeracy, key/functional skills and ESOL	2
Accounting, finance and business management	3

Overall effectiveness

7. Birmingham Metropolitan College is a good college with a good capacity to improve. The college is very large and provides education and training for learners from many diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds. It has existed for eighteen months. In its first year of operation a greater proportion of learners was successful than had been the case for the two predecessor colleges in the previous year. College data for 2010/11 indicate further improvements in learners' outcomes compared with the same time last year. Most learners enjoy college life. They feel exceptionally safe in college. Most make satisfactory progress. Although many learners from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve satisfactorily, others do not. Apprentices do not succeed as well as expected. Many learners make outstanding contributions to their communities. Although most learners enjoy their lessons and good relationships with teachers and assessors, they do not always have enough challenge to encourage them to progress quickly. Most learners improve their assignments because of helpful

feedback. The very wide range of courses at most levels meets the needs of learners and employers exceptionally well. Many learners gain significantly from the college's outstanding partnerships with a large number of external organisations and employers. Learners receive good support that helps them to stay on course and succeed, especially those who have additional learning support.

8. Governors, leaders and managers promote the safety of learners outstandingly well. They promote equality and diversity strongly and achieve high levels of educational and social inclusion, but they do not analyse all aspects of college life by different groups of learners. They govern and lead the college well. Managers and staff complete a satisfactory self-assessment, but they do not give enough emphasis to improving learners' outcomes. Managers provide a very high quality environment that is conducive to learning and which learners appreciate greatly.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Most success rates are average. Many learners study at advanced level and their success rates are below average. Most learners make satisfactory progress compared with their prior attainment. Large numbers of Train to Gain learners complete their qualifications within the expected timescale. The fewer number of apprentices, however, have low success rates.
- The success rates of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds have increased and are close to national averages. The attainment of learners from a few minority ethnic cultures, however, has been too low for too long.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable and build a positive rapport with their learners that aids their enjoyment of lessons. Whilst much good teaching, learning and assessment practice exists, too many lessons do not provide enough challenge for learners to extend their knowledge and ensure that they all make good or better progress.
- The system to monitor the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Managers have improved quality systems and focused staff training to produce greater consistency in lesson planning. The arrangements to moderate the internal lesson observation outcomes of such a large team of observers are insufficient to ensure consistent judgements.
- The assessment of learners' work and the frequent monitoring of learners' progress are good. In a minority of cases, however, teachers' written feedback does not identify clearly enough what learners should do to improve. The quality of individual target setting in several subject areas is good, but it is too general in others to be helpful to learners.
- The college's outstanding range of programmes meets the needs of learners and employers extremely well. Learners' opportunities to progress to higher-level courses and employment are very good. Much provision supports many community groups and the college promotes educational and social inclusion very effectively.

- Partnerships with external organisations are outstanding. Managers are very proactive in collaborating with other education and training partners in the city and beyond. They make very good use of relationships with employers and local and national organisations to inform and enhance the curriculum. Learners benefit greatly from the very effective links with employers and local universities.
- The support for learners to help them succeed is good. Most learners have many opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through a comprehensive range of enrichment activities. In a few subject areas, however, learners are unaware of what is available. Managers have effective systems to identify if learners are at risk of failing.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders are highly effective in raising expectations. Curriculum managers make secure improvements to the quality of provision. Managers have a clear strategic direction and governors provide excellent support and monitor performance well. Financial management and control are outstanding.
- Managers have recently strengthened quality assurance arrangements and have made improvement processes increasingly effective. The self-assessment report contains an insufficiently self-critical analysis of key areas of performance relating to learners' outcomes. Managers give insufficient attention to target setting to improve learners' outcomes and the monitoring of progress against these targets.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion and promotes a culture of respect and tolerance. Managers do not, however, monitor rigorously how all aspects of college life affect different groups of learners. They have not resolved persistent underachievement by certain groups of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Managers ensure that security staff provide exceptionally well-controlled access to college sites and a very good balance between security and sensitivity. 'Safeguarders' provide excellent support for learners. Managers ensure that learners are involved in decision-making processes and they use learners' and employers' views to make improvements.

What does Birmingham Metropolitan College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates on long courses, and especially at advanced level, by improving the quality of learners' individual target setting in progress reviews, individual learning plans and lessons and by monitoring the value and usefulness of these targets more rigorously.
- Improve the management of apprenticeship training programmes so that high proportions of learners succeed and do so within the expected time.

- Improve learners' experience and progress in lessons by ensuring that teachers use initial assessment information to set challenging activities for each learner, that they check each learner's understanding and that they share the good teaching and assessment practices which exist in the college.
- Increase the rigour of the moderation of lesson observations by ensuring that all observers give due priority to the key areas for improvement especially the quality of learning and that their grading more accurately reflects the learners' experience.
- Ensure that all managers make a more rigorous self-critical analysis of performance as part of their self-assessment process, and set and monitor closely specific targets to improve provision, especially for outcomes for learners.
- Ensure that managers' analysis of all aspects of college life includes a clear consideration of the impact on different groups of learners. Identify and monitor rigorously specific actions to remove the underperformance by certain groups of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- their helpful teachers and assessors
- teaching that maintains interest and is fun
- the safe environment
- the excellent response to their complaints
- the advice and guidance before they start their courses
- being involved in producing the new attendance policy
- being respected, consulted and heard
- the good support they receive.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the quantity of useful materials on the virtual learning environment
- long gaps between lessons
- the availability of hot food in the late afternoon and evening at the James Watt campus
- notice boards to inform which events and activities are happening
- information about the enrichment activities available.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the professionalism, knowledge and competence of college staff

- the effective support for employees with literacy and language needs and for those with barriers to learning
- the frequent and prompt feedback on learners' progress and attendance
- the creative and effective responses to their needs.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no areas identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. The college has a good capacity to make and sustain improvement. Governors monitor performance closely. The principal and senior managers are determined to improve the quality of provision and learners' experiences. They use strategic planning to focus clearly on raising expectations and aspirations and on meeting needs and priorities. The college has appropriate staffing and significant financial resources to continue to improve outcomes for learners.
10. The views of learners and employers inform the self-assessment and quality improvement arrangements well. Resulting actions have a beneficial impact on improving the quality of provision. Increasingly, managers use data more effectively to monitor performance although the analysis of success rates to identify areas of concern is less effective. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement noted during inspection but places insufficient emphasis on areas of concern in its grading of certain key aspects. Managers at all levels are committed to securing sustained improvement. College in-year data indicate significant increases in pass and retention rates compared with the same period in 2009/10.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Most long course success rates are at or just below national average rates. Success rates for adult learners on long courses at foundation and intermediate levels are satisfactory, but at advanced level they are very low and have been so for two years. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses at foundation and advanced level are satisfactory and at intermediate level are just above average. At foundation level, success rates have declined for three years. Success rates for the significant numbers of learners aged 16 to 18 on GCE and AS subjects are satisfactory, but they are low for adults. The proportion of learners gaining high pass grades has increased over the last three years and is satisfactory. Even though many learners come from areas of high disadvantage and unemployment, most make satisfactory progress compared with their prior attainment. Most short course success rates are close to average. Success rates by learners aged 14 to 16 are satisfactory. College data indicate substantial increases in current module pass rates and overall retention rates.
12. Male learners' success rates are higher than those for female learners. Success rates by learners from minority ethnic backgrounds increased in 2009/10 and are just below average. Success rates by learners aged 16 to 18 from Pakistani, Mixed White and Asian and Any Other backgrounds and by adults from any Asian, Black African and Any Other background are low and have been so for some time. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those receiving learning support gain significantly higher success rates than other learners.

13. Key skills success rates have declined significantly over three years and are very low. The number of learners taking key skills has also declined significantly, as the number taking functional skills has risen. Functional skills success rates are high. The proportion of the many learners on Train to Gain courses who complete within their expected timescale has increased to just above average. Their overall success rates, however, are just below average. Overall apprenticeship success rates for the relatively small number of learners involved are very low as is the proportion that completes their training within the expected timescale.
14. Learners' progression between levels in the college is satisfactory. The proportion of successful applications to higher education is high. Attendance in lessons observed by inspectors is low, but most learners are punctual. Learners enjoy their work and college life and feel exceptionally safe in their learning environment. The development of their economic and social well-being is good. Learners receive good information about health and well-being. They make an outstanding contribution to their communities and promote community cohesion very effectively. Many learners are involved in effective sustainability projects.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. In most lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge, build a very good rapport with learners and ensure the very effective promotion of safe working practices. In lessons where teaching and learning are good or outstanding, teachers use questioning very well to extend the depth of learners' knowledge. Learners participate fully and make good and rapid progress. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not plan lessons to meet the wide range of learners' abilities. They do not challenge learners to ensure they retain interest and make rapid progress. Teachers occasionally miss opportunities to promote equality and diversity.
16. The internal lesson observation process is satisfactory and improving. During the merger, managers streamlined the management of teaching and learning. They continue to strengthen the quality improvement processes leading to much greater consistency in the approach to lesson planning and more focused staff development across all sites. The arrangements to moderate the observation outcomes of such a large team of observers are insufficient to ensure consistent judgements.
17. The assessment of learners' work, including for employer-based provision, is well planned, frequent and fair. The written feedback in a minority of subjects is sometimes too brief to be helpful and does not specify exactly what learners should do to improve further. The regular monitoring of learners' progress is good and is improving in all subject areas. Most learners are clear about their minimum target grades, but other targets to aid their progress are not always specific or timed.

18. The development of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to promote best practice and support learning is good and teachers and learners increasingly use it to aid learning. The effective use of information and learning technologies to aid understanding is less consistent.
19. The initial assessment arrangements for the identification and the monitoring of learners on foundation and intermediate level programmes who require additional support are good. The proportions of these learners who take up the offer of support and are successful in their studies are high. The initial identification and monitoring of the literacy and numeracy support needs of advanced level learners are satisfactory. Teachers use learners' initial assessment information effectively in certain subjects such as ESOL to ensure that lessons meet the needs of individual learners, but the value of this in other areas is inconsistent.
20. The college meets the needs and interests of its users outstandingly well. It offers an outstanding range of courses and provision. It provides courses for over 400 school pupils aged 14 to 16, a very extensive range of provision and progression opportunities in 14 subject areas and expanding apprenticeship provision. Programmes align extremely well with local and regional employment and further study opportunities. A high proportion of learners progresses to employment or higher education. Through very good community provision, the college supports educational and social inclusion extremely well. The construction skills centre is highly effective in helping young people not in training or employment to gain skills and move into employment or further study. Learners have a very wide range of opportunities for personal and social development, including visits and trips, sports activities and charity events. A few learners are not fully aware of these activities and enrichment planning in a minority of subject areas is underdeveloped.
21. The college has an outstanding range of well-established and very effective partnerships with employers, schools, universities, community groups and national bodies. Managers make extremely good use of these contacts to inform curriculum development and enhance staff development. Learners benefit from work experience, employment opportunities, progression opportunities and access to modern industry-standard resources. Managers are very successful in attracting support from national employers and they have established several very well resourced academies particularly in emerging technologies. Staff use partnerships with education providers and community groups extremely well to engage learners from disadvantaged areas and to provide them with good progression routes.
22. Care, guidance and support are good. Learners value highly the readily available personal, financial and welfare support. Most staff identify learners at risk of not completing very effectively. Additional learning support on all sites is good. Most tutors make good use of the review process to set challenging targets for learners and to identify those who would benefit from extra support through the mentoring system. Tutors use frequent tutorials to monitor learners' progress

effectively. They use very appropriate target setting to challenge learners to improve. They plan the majority of tutorials well and use a good mix of monitoring, study support and personal development. In a few cases, however, tutors do not plan tutorials thoroughly and they do not meet learners' expectations.

23. Advice and guidance are good. Learners gain the knowledge to choose courses appropriate to their aims and aspirations. They receive a helpful and informative induction to college life and to their programme of study. Learners have good opportunities to explore their future options by attending dedicated careers events for each subject area. Guidance and support for those applying to university are good.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

24. The principal provides excellent leadership and, with senior managers, has been instrumental in securing a strong strategic position for the college. Senior managers and governors managed the recent merger very effectively. They have created a single college culture called 'The BMET Way' very successfully. This positive and supportive culture has a beneficial impact on both staff and learners; it raises expectations and promotes ambition throughout the organisation.
25. Managers work extremely well with external partners as part of a well-considered strategic plan to ensure that the college meets the needs of learners, employers and communities. Managers have rationalised the curriculum appropriately to meet local, regional and national priorities. Whilst the strategic direction of the college is clear and aligns with the college's mission and vision, many of the associated targets to monitor performance and measure impact are too complex. In several instances, especially concerning learners' outcomes, targets are insufficiently specific or demanding and managers do not prioritise them appropriately. Managers continue to make significant improvements to the high quality accommodation and resources and have invested greatly in improving technologies to support learning.
26. Governors provide excellent support for managers and contribute significantly to informing strategic direction. They use their extensive range of skills, experience and expertise well, especially in chairing sub-committees and on the many 'task and finish' groups that exist. The audit, strategy and finance and business development sub-committees are extremely effective in supporting and questioning managers. Governors' challenge and monitoring of academic performance, however, are less effective because the information provided to them does not identify key areas of underperformance sufficiently.
27. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are outstanding. Managers use robust recruitment procedures to ensure that appropriate screening activities, including criminal record checks, are in place for all staff, governors, contractors and

volunteers. Frequent safeguarding training for staff ensures that they are fully aware of responsibilities and procedures. The 'safeguarders' system ensures experienced and well-trained staff are available to deal with any issues. Links with external support agencies are excellent. Managers give a very high priority to safeguarding and a designated governor oversees the implementation of comprehensive policies and procedures. Security staff manage access to all main campuses extremely effectively and learners feel very safe within the college.

28. The college is an inclusive community that welcomes learners from exceptionally diverse backgrounds. Managers have developed a culture of respect and tolerance. The college makes a significant contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. A single equalities scheme is in place and managers complete comprehensive impact assessments on college policies and procedures. Managers analyse data by ethnicity, age, gender and disability thoroughly. They have been successful in increasing success rates for many groups of learners, but not the underachievement of certain groups of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. Their analysis of learners' surveys and of learners' enrichment participation by ethnicity is underdeveloped. Staff training in equality and diversity is appropriate. Staff promote equality and diversity to learners very well in many subject areas, but less effectively in others.
29. The engagement of learners in decision-making is increasingly effective. Departmental and campus committees are particularly good and enable learners to discuss issues with relevant managers. Managers have made many improvements to provision suggested by learners. The effectiveness of learners' engagement varies, however, and not all meetings focus sufficiently on promoting improvement to provision. Learners are involved in staff recruitment processes and are members of a few college committees where they make valuable contributions. Engagement with employers and other stakeholders is very effective and managers use their views well to improve provision.
30. The processes for monitoring and evaluating performance continue to evolve. Curriculum management is improving and, in many areas, is good. Managers use management information systems effectively to determine actions for improvement. Their analysis of data on learners' performance, however, is insufficiently detailed. Managers do not identify key areas for improvement relating to learners' outcomes sufficiently rigorously, nor do they prioritise them in the self-assessment report. Managers do not always produce sufficiently detailed action plans or targets.
31. Managers' robust business planning processes, including excellent procurement practice and innovative sustainability initiatives, ensure the very effective management of resources to meet learners' needs. Financial management and control are outstanding. Managers make continuous improvements to the quality of provision and value for money is good.

Subject areas

Health, social care and childcare

Grade 3

Context

32. Full-time and part-time courses are available from foundation level to advanced level. Provision is available at the two main campuses. Of 1,951 learners, approximately 853 are aged 16 to 18. Nearly 88% of learners are female. Approximately 50% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Learners can take a range of additional qualifications such as paediatric first aid, first aid, food hygiene, counselling skills and through voluntary work.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are inadequate. Success rates on most long courses are low. Older learners are more successful than younger ones. Many courses have below average retention and success rates. For current learners, however, progress, retention and attendance have improved. Success rates for Train to Gain learners completing within their expected timescale are satisfactory.
- Learners enjoy their studies. Their work is of at least a satisfactory standard. Learners develop satisfactory levels of knowledge and skills that they apply well in lessons and in their workplaces. Learners have increased their awareness of the misuse of drugs. They are proud of the work they produce and learners on advanced level courses develop good research skills.
- Learners improve their self-confidence and acquire satisfactory vocational skills. All learners have a good understanding of the needs of their communities and of others. Many learners progress to higher qualifications and employment. Employers value learners' skills. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities of working in the sector.
- Learners feel very safe in college. They have a very good understanding of what to do if they wish to complain and know how to keep themselves and each other safe. Learners demonstrate mature and responsible attitudes. They value the college's very effective security arrangements.
- Learners are able to make satisfactory choices about their health and well-being. They receive satisfactory support and opportunities to experience and adopt healthy lifestyles. Learners on most courses make a satisfactory contribution to the community through volunteering and through work-placements.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers plan activities well and learners enjoy them. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently and fail to engage all of them. Teachers make appropriate use of recent legislation and national campaigns to ensure learners apply new knowledge and skills in their work placements. Behaviour is good.

- The quality of the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is good on most courses. Teachers have improved the tracking of learners' progress that leads to early identification of learners at risk of not succeeding. Most learners know how to improve their work, but learners on Train to Gain provision do not receive sufficiently detailed feedback.
- The range of provision is wide and meets learners' needs well. Clear progression routes exist through all areas. Induction involves a thorough scan of learners' skills which helps provide them with guidance on appropriate courses. Employers are involved effectively in planning learning and development opportunities for learners.
- The college has good partnerships and is highly responsive to employers' needs. Health and social care staff work very effectively with local health trusts and the local council. Childcare staff work in partnership with a wide range of nurseries and schools. Learners benefit from further activities such as enrichment, careers events and trips.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and improving. Learners make good use of effective personal support. Tutorials are effective and link well to the monitoring of progress, which provides learners with opportunities to explore matters of concern. Advice and guidance arrangements are very accessible and learners value them.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have recently initiated an increased focus on quality improvement. Their more thorough monitoring of learners' progress has had a positive and measurable impact. Staff are enthusiastic and supportive of college leadership.
- Staff contribute fully to the self-assessment process and receive good training for their own development. Managers use data effectively to monitor retention and success rates. Their attention to improving success rates of underachieving groups is insufficient. Their promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding.

What does Birmingham Metropolitan College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates for all learners, especially those at risk of under-performing by setting clear, challenging targets, increasing support, continuing to monitor progress more effectively and by providing more detailed feedback to Train to Gain learners.
- Improve teaching and learning through more accurate lesson observation grading, more relevant staff development for identified areas of development and ensuring an increasing promotion of equality and diversity.
- Improve the effectiveness of management actions to increase success rates for under-achieving groups of learners by ensuring managers focus more clearly on setting and achieving rigorous improvement targets.

Engineering

Grade 3

Context

33. Full-time and part-time courses are available from foundation to advanced levels. Over 830 learners are full-time and nearly 930 study part-time. Approximately 3% are female and just over half are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of the provision is at the James Watt campus. The Erdington Skills Centre is the base for programmes for learners not in education, employment or training. About 540 learners are on apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on foundation level courses and for Train to Gain learners at advanced level are high. The success rate of Train to Gain learners at foundation level is very high. Success rates are low for learners on intermediate level courses and for apprentices. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.
- The standard of learners' and apprentices' practical work is good. Staff encourage high standards. Learners complete practical work with care and precision. They make satisfactory progress. They improve their economic well being and employability by acquiring a wide range of relevant skills and additional qualifications.
- Learners feel very safe in college and in their workplace. Teachers and employers give a high priority to health and safety and learners have a good awareness of health and safety practices. They have a satisfactory understanding of health and well being topics such as healthy eating and sexual health. The college promotes healthy eating options well.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of varied activities. They plan activities carefully to meet learners' different abilities. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not use questions thoroughly to test learners' understanding. They do not relate theory to practice and rely too much on PowerPoint presentations.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers plan a wide variety of assessments well. They link assessment carefully to teaching and training. The standard of learners' assignments is mostly high. Teachers' feedback is too general and does not always aid learners' improvement. Employment-based assessment is frequent and constructive and helps improve work-based learners' performance.
- Tracking and recording of learners' progress are good. Managers have established a clear system to check the progress of work-based learners against their planned end dates. They keep detailed and thorough records that they update frequently. Staff monitor learners' progress at course level satisfactorily.
- Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers well. The use of partnerships to develop the provision is satisfactory. Work-based learners

receive relevant experience in the workplace through strong relationships with employers. Managers use appropriate methods to identify business needs and relevant skills training for employees.

- Learners receive good support in classroom, workplace and workshops. The provision of additional learning support in workshop activities is good. Learners value the high levels of support from teachers and assessors that builds their confidence and self-esteem. Staff provide additional learning assistance on an individual or group basis sensitively.
- Managers are successful in improving attendance, retention and teaching and training. They organise courses well. Internal communications are effective and staff work well together. They regard the management style as positive and supportive. The management of apprenticeship programmes is improving.
- High quality resources and specialist equipment in workshops and the workplace support learning and benefit learners. Teachers and support staff are suitably experienced and qualified. Staff development is effective. Teachers do not promote the use of the VLE sufficiently to ensure that all learners make use of the wide range of materials available to support their studies.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are good and learners and apprentices understand them well. Staff promote equality and diversity satisfactorily through lessons and within the college environment. All learners speak highly of the excellent security arrangements at the different sites.
- Self assessment is inclusive and mostly accurate. Managers have identified the key improvement actions needed. Plans to improve the quality of provision are clear and include frequent monitoring. Staff involvement in self-assessment and quality improvement is good. Managers do not seek the views of learners sufficiently and do not use their opinions to inform self-assessment.

What does Birmingham Metropolitan College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates on college-based courses by closer monitoring of attendance and retention rates. Improve further the monitoring of learners who make slow progress on apprenticeship and intermediate Train to Gain provision and take appropriate actions to resolve.
- Support teachers to make better use of questioning in lessons in order to check all learners' understanding. Ensure more consistency in assignment feedback so that learners know how to improve their work.
- Promote the wide range of good support materials available on the VLE so that all learners access revision and course materials and keep on schedule with their studies and assessments.

Visual arts and media

Grade 2

Context

34. This area provides full-time and part-time courses in art and design, fashion, graphics, film, media and games development from foundation level to level 4. Of 1,496 learners, approximately 89% are aged 16 to 18 and 98% are full time. Just over half of learners are female and just under half are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The provision is available over three sites.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are above average and most learners make satisfactory progress. The proportion of learners gaining high grades is satisfactory. College data show current increases in retention and in unit pass rates compared with the same time last year.
- The standard of learners work is high. In all areas, learners show high levels of skill and execution from the drawing and painting in visual arts to the excellent tailoring and design skills evident in fashion.
- Learners show excellent development of relevant industry skills that contribute to their economic and social well-being. Learners frequently work collaboratively with external agencies on live projects that increase their personal and social skills, enjoyment of learning and employability.
- Learners feel safe and supported in their work and appreciate the impact of the security presence at all sites. They have a good knowledge and understanding of safe practice in their work. Staff embed safeguarding practice across the provision and respond rapidly to issues of concern.
- Learners make significant and high quality contributions to their communities. They create cohesion between community groups through a wide range of activities and events. They worked effectively with school pupils in the design of their school's logo and uniform.
- Teaching, training and assessment are good and support learning and development. All teachers use their own current industry practice to extend learners' skills and provide good technical grounding. Teachers use a wide range of interesting teaching methods to engage all learners. They support learners well through the assessment process.
- Teachers use technology very effectively to promote and support learning. This is particularly strong in games development and media. Learners have good access to equipment outside lessons. Managers have invested heavily in excellent accommodation, equipment and staff. These have a significant impact on the ability of learners to enjoy and achieve.
- The breadth of provision is excellent and offers learners a large choice of subjects at a wide range of levels. Staff are very aware of progression routes and create very good opportunities for learners to progress. Teachers agree specific and individual targets with all learners that challenge them to progress.

- Learners receive very good support and guidance. Tutors have a clear focus on pastoral and academic issues. Managers and tutors devise effective and robust schemes of work that have a positive impact on learners' attainment and the development of their social and economic well-being.
- Partnerships with employers and industry professionals are excellent. They participate fully in college events. These often lead to work opportunities and new progression routes for learners. Staff have established very effective links with local schools, employers and industry. They create many opportunities for learners to extend their experiences within industry both locally and nationally.
- Leaders and managers create an outstanding ethos of aspiration resulting in many examples of excellence across the provision. They set challenging targets and work hard to meet them. Managers and staff have produced a well-established culture of innovation that fosters exciting cross-curricular projects.
- Managers engage consistently with users to support and promote improvement. They have improved provision based on learners' views, such as changing the location of lessons to allow better access for learners. Learners have a strong involvement with the provision. Managers and staff provide learners with a high awareness of equality and diversity.

What does Birmingham Metropolitan College need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress made by learners compared with their prior attainment by agreeing challenging and supportive targets with them to motivate them to attain beyond their minimum target grades.
- Increase the proportion of learners achieving high grades by continuing to extend and develop their skills and knowledge to a greater degree.

Literacy, numeracy, key/functional skills and ESOL

Grade 2

Context

35. This area offers discrete full-time and part-time courses in ESOL and part-time courses in literacy and numeracy. Provision from entry level 1 to intermediate level is available at the two main campuses and in community locations across the north and centre of the city. Approximately 820 adults and 70 learners aged 16 to 18 study ESOL, about 870 adults and 160 young people study literacy and nearly 430 adults and 50 young people study numeracy. Nearly 650 armed forces learners take literacy and numeracy. Approximately half the learners are female and nearly two-thirds are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates in ESOL speaking and listening, adult literacy levels 1 and 2 and functional skills are high. Retention is satisfactory. Success rates for the full ESOL qualification at entry level and foundation level and for adult literacy and numeracy at entry level are low.
- Learners progress well from entry to higher levels and many progress onto higher-level vocational courses. Staff use accelerated programmes to enable the more able learners to progress rapidly to advanced level courses and they provide ESOL, literacy and numeracy learners with frequent access to testing.
- Learners make good progress, develop good language, literacy and numeracy skills and have a very clear idea of their own goals. They enjoy learning and are enthusiastic, participating thoroughly in lessons and interacting well. Many learners aim to progress to higher-level courses, and others aim to gain employment or to improve their work skills.
- Teachers incorporate the Every Child Matters themes into schemes of work and lesson plans well. These include healthy living, job search, employment skills, diversity, health and safety, mental and physical health, citizenship, the environment and education. Teachers prepare ESOL learners for life in Britain well and enable them to deal with the difficult situations they often face.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough and lead to ESOL teachers and learners agreeing effective targets. Learners understand their targets and record progress towards them frequently. In certain literacy groups, however, the setting and reviewing of targets is inconsistent.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have appropriate specialist qualifications. In the best lessons, teachers use interesting, relevant materials and a wide range of teaching strategies. Enthusiastic learners participate and interact well. Teachers challenge learners to extend their ideas. In the few weaker lessons, learning is slow and the interaction between learners is less effective.

- The use of information and learning technology is insufficient. Too many classrooms are under-resourced. Teachers use projectors mainly for displaying lesson objectives or for PowerPoint presentations. ESOL entry-level learners demonstrate good practice by using electronic tablets to record information they had written for homework.
- The provision across the north and centre of Birmingham is extensive and reaches many diverse communities. Courses exist for different groups of learners during the day and evening in a wide range of venues including schools, libraries and children's centres. Teachers use a bus to take learning into communities to increase and widen participation in learning.
- Staff use extensive partnerships to promote participation effectively and to support learners. They offer discrete, supported classes through a partnership with an organisation for the deaf. Productive links exist with health organisations, employers, the probation service, the armed forces, religious organisations and community ventures.
- Leadership and management are very good. Staff value their managers very highly and find them accessible and approachable. Managers support their staff well, promote high standards and communicate priorities and actions successfully. They analyse data effectively and take decisive action to resolve underperformance. They monitor and update actions frequently.
- The self-assessment process is thorough but the report overstates strengths. It is insufficiently self-critical and does not differentiate effectively between areas for improvement and those for development. Tutors are involved in the production of the self-assessment report and understand the quality improvement plan targets.
- Safeguarding is good and has a high priority. Learners appreciate the highly-visible presence of the friendly, helpful security staff on the main sites who carefully check identity badges. They feel safe in the friendly, welcoming atmosphere of the outreach centres. Learners can express any concerns and feel confident that managers will act on them.

What does Birmingham Metropolitan College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater consistency in the use of individual learning plans, target setting and reviews, by sharing the good practice existing in ESOL with other areas.
- Improve the quality of lessons by increasing the availability of current information and learning technology equipment in classrooms and centres and enabling all teachers to use it effectively to aid learning.
- Improve learners' speaking and listening skills by sharing the good practice existing in ESOL with other areas.

Accounting, finance and business management

Grade 3

Context

36. This area has nearly 2,000 learners of whom 914 are female. About two-thirds are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Ninety learners receive additional learning support and 36 have declared a disability. Over 1,430 learners are on vocational programmes, and about 300 study academic courses. Approximately 250 are on work-based learning programmes. Full-time and part-time provision is available from foundation to advanced level.

Key findings

- Success rates are satisfactory. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are average, whereas success rates for adults are below average. Success rates for work-based learners are satisfactory. Learners receiving additional support succeed better than those who do not receive support. Most learners make satisfactory progress compared with their prior attainment.
- Learners on professional and accounting courses make good progress. They enjoy their studies and produce high standards of work. Attendance by learners aged 16 to 18 is improving but remains low. Work-based learners produce high standards of work. Most apply themselves well to activities in lessons. A few progress less well than expected.
- The development of learners' economic well-being is particularly effective. They develop enterprise skills very well. Learners have a wide range of opportunities to extend their skills through internships and business mentoring. They benefit from the college's lead on an initiative to help local schools and colleges to promote sound personal finance.
- Learners feel very safe. They really appreciate the high visibility of well-trained and effective security personnel at each campus. Staff make very good risk assessments for all activities. These ensure that all learners adopt safe working practices. Teachers have a very good awareness of their responsibilities and procedures to safeguard learners.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and on professional and accounting programmes are good. Assessment on work-based learning programmes is satisfactory, but monitoring does not identify early enough learners making slow progress. Teachers do not always challenge learners aged 16 to 18 sufficiently to accelerate their progress. Their use of questioning to check learning is inconsistent.
- Enrichment for learners aged 16 to 18 is insufficient. They have little awareness of and participation in extra-curricular activities. They want managers to extend the limited range of enrichment activities available and to have more opportunities to participate.
- Partnerships are well established and effective. Work-based learning employers have a good understanding of NVQ and framework requirements. Staff work

well with external organisations to provide a particularly effective financial capability course for learners who speak other languages. They have designed a pre-apprenticeship course that guarantees learners, on successful completion, an apprenticeship at the age of 18.

- Managers use effective monitoring systems and interventions to produce improvements in current retention and achievement compared with the same time last year. Their actions, however, have not narrowed the underachievement of learners from Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi heritages.
- Staff make appropriate contributions to the college's self assessment, but managers do not take account of learners' views fully to improve provision. They identify strengths and areas for improvement similar to inspector's findings.
- Managers monitor and analyse the performance and progress of learners well. The progress and achievement of learners on professional and accounting programmes have improved. It is too early to judge the impact of improving quality systems on outcomes for learners aged 16 to 18. The internal verification of work-based learning provision is robust.

What does Birmingham Metropolitan College need to do to improve further?

- Increase the success rates of learners aged 16 to 18, by ensuring that they improve their attendance and receive sufficient challenge in lessons to inspire them to progress rapidly.
- Increase the rate of progress of work-based learners by improving the monitoring of their performance.
- Increase the success rates of learners from Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi heritages by ensuring that staff analyse and meet their particular learning and support needs.

Information about the inspection

37. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the previous local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and data on learners and their achievement.
38. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Birmingham Metropolitan College

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

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	8248	33	6040	2140	35
Part-time learners	7420	418	666	4257	2079
Overall effectiveness	2	n/a	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
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?	1				
<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>	1				
Quality of provision	2	n/a	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
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				
Leadership and management	2				
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?	1				
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 1231231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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