

# Middlesbrough College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130570

**Name of lead inspector:** Gwendoline Greaves HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 4 March 2011

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

**Address:** Dock Street  
Middlesbrough  
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## Information about the provider

1. Middlesbrough College is the largest provider of post-16 education and training in the Tees Valley. The majority of provision is Skills Funding Agency/Young People's Learning Agency funded. In August 2008, the college relocated from four sites across Middlesbrough to a new campus close to the town centre. The college offers further education courses in 14 of the 15 designated subject areas, apprenticeships, employer training and higher education (HE) franchised from the University of Teesside. Courses are also offered to school pupils aged 14 to 16. The college subcontracts to 14 community-based training organisations to provide 3% of its provision in the community.
2. In 2009/10, the majority of full-time students were 16 to 18 year-olds while the majority of adults were on part-time provision. Enrolments on long qualifications at advanced level are slightly higher for 16 to 18 year-olds than for adults. Adult enrolments are significantly higher at intermediate level than at other levels. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds accounts for 9% of students compared with a figure of 7% in the local population.
3. Middlesbrough's latest official unemployment rate is 7.7%, against a national rate of 4.1%. One-tenth of the unemployed are young people under the age of 20. Six of Middlesbrough's 23 wards are in the top 10% of the most deprived wards nationally. In 2010, the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving five GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was 43.6% compared with the national average of 54.9%.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - CR Training
  - E-Achieve
  - First Response
  - Gap Training
  - Hope Foundation
  - Learning Curve
  - Learning First
  - Maegis Training
  - North Riding CFA
  - Playgroup Network
  - Systems Group
  - The Unicorn Centre
  - True Alternative
  - Tyneside Training

<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, including Entry to Employment</p>	<p>403 part-time learners</p> <p>3,057 full-time learners 362 part-time learners</p> <p>1,122 learners</p>
<p><b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)</p>	<p>469 full-time learners 3,663 part-time learners</p>
<p><b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>936 learners 163 apprentices</p>
<p><b>Adult and community learning</b></p>	<p>506 learners</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>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	
Health, public services and care	2
Science and mathematics	3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Leisure, travel and tourism	2
Literacy and numeracy	2

## Overall effectiveness

5. The college provides an inclusive, supportive environment that welcomes and encourages students to become involved in a wide range of activities while completing their studies. The college takes good account of students' individual and additional learning needs. Very good focused support is provided early in students' programmes. Students exhibit good health and safety practices, grow in confidence, develop good personal and employability skills, and make positive contributions to the local community.
  
6. The majority of learners remain on programme and successfully achieve their qualifications. Students on full-time vocational programmes are very successful. Those on GCE AS and A2 programmes succeed as well as students in other similar colleges. However, there are some AS programmes where achievement

is low and not all students achieve the grades predicted on the strength of their GCSE results. The number of students who successfully complete apprenticeships is satisfactory and success on Train to Gain programmes is good.

7. The majority of teaching is varied and challenging. It captures the interest of students and uses information and learning technology (ILT) imaginatively. However, some sessions are no better than satisfactory because they lack challenge and teachers do not consistently check that students have learned. The college's outstanding range of partnerships widens the opportunities for students to be involved in a variety of activities and gain experience. The college's tutorial system provides good one-to-one support, but the quality of group tutorials is variable.
8. The college's strategic direction is clear and focuses effectively on students and their potential success. The college sets itself challenging improvement targets which are rigorously monitored by governors, managers and curriculum staff. The college has good safeguarding arrangements and students feel safe. The college's promotion of equality and diversity is good and an atmosphere of respect and tolerance permeates the college. The college encourages students to voice their views actively but acknowledges that they could be more involved in strategic decision-making and self-assessment. Self-assessment is broadly accurate, but occasionally underestimates weaknesses.

## Main findings

- Success rates are high, placing the college in the top 25% of similar colleges. Between 2008 and 2010, overall success rates improved markedly. However, this improvement masked some low success rates on AS courses in science, business, law and in some visual and performing arts subjects.
- Apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory. Success on Train to Gain programmes is high, as is the success rate for 14 to 16 year-olds on school programmes. Programmes for those 14 to 16 year-olds who are not in education employment or training have satisfactory success rates.
- Pass rates are high. In-year retention and attendance rates are high. The 2009/10 data showed that high-grade achievements and the progress students made compared with their previous achievement remained low. However, current learners are already making better progress, with many meeting their aspirational grades. Standards of work are good. Staff support students well in developing knowledge and skills that support their progression into further education, training or employment.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, there is effective planning to meet the needs of all students and to challenge and extend them to achieve their full potential. In less effective sessions, activities do not sufficiently engage all students and checks on learning are insufficient. Assessment and feedback to students are generally good, although, in a minority of cases, the detail provided is too limited.

- In some subjects, information and learning technology (ILT) is used well to support learning but in others it is under-utilised. The system to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is effective and is strongly linked to staff development, which supports teachers in developing their classroom practice.
- The provision is responsive and meets the needs and interests of students, employers and community groups very effectively. A wide range of courses from entry to degree level is available, with well-planned progression routes. There is a strong focus on enterprise activities. Good use of enrichment broadens students' understanding of their subject area, develops employability skills and enhances their health and well-being.
- Partnership work is outstanding across a broad range of partners, such as schools, HE, employers, community groups and the local authority. Students benefit greatly from these initiatives, for example in supporting their transition to HE and employment.
- Impartial pre-enrolment guidance provides students with a clear understanding of the demands of their course and has led to improvements in retention. Initial assessments are very thorough. Additional learning support is quickly put in place when identified. A high proportion of students benefit from receiving additional support which is extremely effective in ensuring that these students stay on their course and succeed.
- Students' progress is thoroughly monitored. The college has worked hard to develop a robust electronic monitoring system and most targets are clear so that learners know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students value their one-to-one tutorials and the accessibility of staff who frequently go the extra mile to support them. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of group tutorials.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are given a high priority and are good. Health and safety are robust. Students adhere to safe working practices in lessons and thorough risk assessments are carried out in the college, the workplace and for external trips. The college's promotion of equality and diversity is good overall, although its promotion in lessons is inconsistent. An atmosphere of respect and tolerance is a high priority. Well-focused activities encourage learners to acquire greater cultural awareness through trips and visits.
- The new Principal has built on existing good practice and has re-energised the college and its vision for the future. Challenging targets for improvement are set. Closer monitoring and thorough performance management have led to marked improvements in students' outcomes in most areas. Self-assessment is broadly accurate, but occasionally it under-estimates weaknesses and a few action plans are insufficiently precise. Where this is the case, improvements have been less rapid and underperformance remains.
- Good arrangements exist to encourage students to become active citizens of the college. Learners' views are sought regularly and they are extremely confident that they are listened to and that the college will respond. The college is aware that further work is needed to ensure that more learners have an

opportunity to shape the college's work and to be involved in decision-making and the college's self-assessment.

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

- Improve success rates on underperforming AS courses and further improve the progress made by all students.
- Further develop teaching and learning so that all lessons meet the needs of all students effectively, ensure that ILT is used well to support learning and that tutors' feedback is sufficiently detailed across all subjects to help students improve the quality of their work.
- Monitor the quality of group tutorials through observations, identifying good practice and aspects for improvement in order to focus staff development on improving the quality and consistency of group tutorials.
- Extend the engagement of learners still further so that more are involved in all aspects of the college's decision-making and self-assessment.
- Strengthen self-assessment to ensure that all weaknesses are clearly identified and use existing quality assurance processes and performance management arrangements to eradicate remaining inconsistencies.

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

### **What learners like:**

- the safe and friendly college environment that has a good atmosphere, with respect shown by everyone towards each other
- the approachable teachers who are always willing to provide extra help when needed
- the knowledgeable teachers who are enthusiastic about their subject and have good industrial experience
- the good range of practical activities and group work in lessons that help them learn
- the extra activities outside lessons that are interesting and fun
- the new building and the quality of vocational resources that give them realistic experiences within their vocational area
- the range and quality of the food offered
- the free and subsidised buses that make it easier to get to college.

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

- a reduction in the gaps between timetabled lessons
- the few boring lessons where too much time is spent listening to the teacher
- the long queues in the café at break and lunch-time

- being able to log on to the college's computers more quickly
- more consistent challenge to the minority of students who are disruptive in a few lessons.

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

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

- formal off-the-job training that helps learners develop the relevant skills to do their jobs better
- the good communication between mentors in the workplace and college staff
- the involvement of employers in learners' reviews and the monitoring of their progress
- the new skills and confidence that employees develop as a result of their training
- well-qualified and knowledgeable assessors who are flexible in planning assessments and training to meet the needs of learners and employers
- the responsiveness of the college in developing bespoke training
- the involvement of employers in designing the curriculum and using their expertise to share good practice
- good support for work-based learners.

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

- no improvements were identified.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. The college's record in bringing about sustained increases in students' achievement is good. Most of the areas identified at the last inspection have been rectified, although progress to improve the quality of mathematics and science has been slow and improvements in this area are recent. Strengths identified at the last inspection have been maintained.
10. Self-assessment is broadly accurate and contains good evidence to support most judgements. Well-established quality assurance arrangements, timely management interventions, close monitoring of challenging targets and a high priority given to teaching and learning have resulted in notable improvements in success rates for long courses in most subject areas. Arrangements to assure the quality of tutorials are insufficient. Managers promote a self-critical culture. They set challenging targets across the college and have a good understanding of what is working and what more needs to be done. Current in-year data confirm further improvements in retention and attendance.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. The college's headline success rate has improved steadily and is high. Success rates on long programmes improved markedly between 2008 and 2010 and are now high overall. They are well above national average at all levels for adults and high for 16 to 18 year-olds at foundation and intermediate levels. At advanced level, the success rate for 16 to 18 year-olds is now satisfactory.
12. Low success rates on advanced level programmes were an area for improvement at the last inspection. Vocational provision at this level has remained significantly higher than the national rate. The AS and A2 success rates for 16 to 18 year-olds have improved significantly from a very low starting point and are now above the previous year's national average. Some poor success rates on AS provision in science, business, law and some visual and performing arts programmes still remain, but this year in-year retention and student progress on these courses are much improved.
13. Overall success rates on apprenticeships are satisfactory. A high proportion of apprentices achieve their qualification within the agreed timescale. The success rate for Train to Gain is high and consistently above national rates. Success rates for 14 to 16 year-old learners on schools programmes are high and satisfactory for those learners not in education, employment or training.
14. There are no significant variations in success rates between different student groups. However, students identified with additional learning needs are slightly more successful than other students.

15. Pass rates on long courses are high for all learners. However, high-grade achievements, although improving, remain low on too many programmes. Current in-year retention and attendance are high.
16. Despite a three-year trend of improvement, the progress students make in relation to their entry qualifications has remained low on AS and A-level provision. However, current learners on these programmes are making good progress, with many meeting their predicted grades. Standards of work are good. Staff provide good support for students in developing knowledge and skills that support their progression to further training or employment.
17. Students enjoy college and many participate in a good range of additional activities to support their health and well-being. Students are rightly proud of their college environment and feel safe. The college promotes healthy eating and regular hydration using the water machines.
18. Students have many opportunities to contribute to their local community. These include fund-raising and charitable events, voluntary work through the V-volunteer scheme, providing services to local groups, participating in college decision-making through the student council and being student ambassadors.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

19. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects. However there are variations within and between subject areas. In the best lessons, teachers plan highly effective activities which ensure that the differing needs of students are fully met. Teachers utilise a good range of activities to engage students and ensure that they are challenged to achieve as well as they can. Staff use their good levels of vocational knowledge to help set learning in context, which broadens students' understanding. In the less effective sessions, tasks are not adapted to meet all student needs. The most able students are insufficiently challenged and checking of understanding is limited. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is inconsistent. Although there are examples of using topics effectively to develop students' understanding of these issues, opportunities are also missed.
20. In most subject areas, assessment is good. Feedback to students is usually clear and helpful, with constructive comments to help students improve. In work-based learning, assessment is used very effectively and learners have a good understanding of the process. The college has well-organised practices in place to assess students' literacy and numeracy skills, and any additional learning needs they may have. Once needs are identified, effective support is swiftly put in place. Students have a very positive view of support, which is effective in developing their learning skills and helping them to achieve success.
21. The college has a detailed strategy for developing the use of ILT to support learning across all areas in the college. There are some examples of tutors using technology very well, for example in hair and beauty, engineering, and leisure, travel and tourism, but in some areas tutors use ILT on a more limited

scale. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well by students to extend learning beyond the classroom. They are able to access a wide range of information which supports them in their learning.

22. The strong focus placed on teaching and learning and the high priority given to professional development have played a key role in improving teaching and learning. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous, well-embedded and effectively linked to staff development and performance management. Mentors and coaches are used very effectively to support staff in improving and extending their skills. Inspectors agreed with the judgements and grades awarded during joint observations.
23. The college provides a wide range of courses, from entry level to degree level. Students are able to move through the different levels in all subject areas, with clear progression routes available to them. Courses are being continually developed to ensure that they remain relevant to potential students, employers and the local community, for example the additional science programmes planned for 2011/2012. The college is very responsive to local and national priorities, and takes good account of labour market needs. Through effective employer engagement the college has developed bespoke provision to meet the specific needs of industry. It has also changed modes of delivery and the modules covered within a programme to better meet the needs of employers and students.
24. There is a strong focus on meeting the needs of those who have been disengaged from learning. The college works well with local schools to provide courses for 14 to 16 year-old pupils, many of whom achieve well and proceed to further courses or training.
25. Within the college there is a very strong focus on enterprise initiatives which help to develop students' employability skills and benefit the local community. A large number of students are involved in long-term projects, such as developing small businesses to raise money for a sponsored village in Africa. Students have access to a range of well-organised enrichment activities, both linked to the subjects they are studying and to cross-college priorities. This year a detailed monitoring system has been developed so that participation can be measured and the information used to develop the provision further.
26. The college's partnership work is outstanding. It has highly effective links with schools, community groups, a local HE provider, employers and the local authority, with benefits to students as a key focus. There is a renewed focus on partnership work from senior managers, which is ensuring a strong strategic steer to future developments. Good collaborative work with primary and secondary schools familiarises school pupils with the college and supports their transition into learning. Partnership work has a very high profile within construction. Construction students' practical and employability skills have been enhanced by their involvement in developing learning and community facilities in a number of local parks.

27. Partnerships with employers are highly productive. Links with the community are developing well and help the college to engage with hard-to-reach groups, and support them back into learning. Strong links with HE institutions are helping students to develop the skills they need to progress to HE and the college to establish degree-level provision.
28. Initial information, advice and guidance have improved and are now good. The revised entry criteria and interview processes clearly communicate expectations of the course. A good range of welfare services, such as counselling and chaplaincy, is offered. Advice and guidance about progression to HE are very good, with provision of clear careers guidance into employment. The progression rates in college to a higher level and to HE are good. However, the college is unaware of the destinations of too many students.
29. The provision of additional learning support is outstanding. Specialist, well-considered and timely support is in place for students with a wide variety of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students benefit from well-planned in-class or individual support. The success rate for the high proportion of learners receiving additional support is 10 percentage points above the college rate.
30. The introduction of electronic student learning plans has improved the consistency of setting realistic targets. The college has worked very hard to improve consistency in the monitoring of students' attendance, progress and attainment of target grades and such monitoring is now good. Students value highly the individual support they receive from their tutors and teachers. They know what they need to do to improve and their progress is discussed regularly at one-to-one reviews. Pastoral and academic support are good. Parents and carers are well informed about students' progress, and tutors are readily accessible to discuss specific concerns.
31. Group tutorials cover the Every Child Matters (ECM) themes very effectively and these are enhanced by further cross-college activities and a good range of topics on the VLE. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of tutorials. In good tutorials, students are fully engaged and staff are adept at involving them in topical discussions. Some tutorial activities are too easy and fail to interest students so they start to be disruptive.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

32. The Principal is highly ambitious for the college and is relentless in his pursuit of improving the outcomes for students. He is well supported by the recently restructured senior leadership team and by curriculum managers. Strategic planning is incisive, based on extensive market information and clearly linked to operational planning at college, department and course level. Challenging improvement targets are set at every level of the college and monitored closely. All staff clearly understand what is expected of them. Curriculum management is good. A strengthened focus on the accountability of managers and teachers is resulting in rapidly improving outcomes for students in most areas of the college.

33. Governance is good. Governors are knowledgeable and have a high level of expertise that enables them to carry out their statutory duties effectively. They are highly supportive of the Principal and senior managers and relationships with other staff are very good. Governors know the college intimately and are effectively deployed on the college's employer liaison forums where their expertise is put to good use in an advisory capacity. Detailed and timely reports help them to provide appropriate challenge on a wide range of topics. Monitoring of key college targets is frequent and rigorous. Clerking arrangements are very effective.
34. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are given a high priority and are good. Policies and procedures are appropriate and monitored closely. Staff and governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding safeguarding. Staff training is covered at induction; updating is monitored and supplemented by a useful and practical safeguarding handbook for staff. The college's safeguarding team is promoted well in the college and all team members have received high-level training. College staff work closely with the local police and external safeguarding agencies. Health and safety are robust. Students adhere to safe working practices in lessons and thorough risk assessments are carried out in the college, the workplace and for external trips. The college carries out comprehensive employment checks. In work-based learning, the understanding of safeguarding responsibilities is not explicitly recorded with employers or learners.
35. The college's promotion of equality and diversity is good. An atmosphere of respect and tolerance permeates the college. Comprehensive training has led to a greater awareness among staff of all aspects of equality. Its promotion within teaching and learning is developing and is good in a few areas but limited in others. Outside of lessons, well-focused activities encourage learners to acquire greater cultural awareness through trips and visits. Learners in visual and performing arts are involved in community projects to help prevent extremist views.
36. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the college continues to widen participation in education and training. The college provides extensive opportunities for learners from all backgrounds, including vulnerable adults, disaffected school pupils and those not in education, employment or training. Good use is made of data to analyse the performance of different groups of learners.
37. The college has established good mechanisms for engaging learners in decision-making, with the further development of a more active student council a high priority. Every half-term senior managers embark on the college's 'go out and listen' initiative where each manager talks to 10 learners to gauge how they are finding college life. Learners' views are actively sought through forums, surveys, course reviews and student council meetings. Learners' representatives highly value the direct contact they have with the Principal and are very proud to represent their peers. However, managers are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that all learners, including those in work-based learning, are

engaged in helping to shape the college's work, including the annual college self-assessment.

38. Self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements are good and effective in improving most aspects of college provision. Procedures for strengthening the quality of teaching are rigorous; a significant proportion of teaching and learning is now good or better. The monitoring of the quality of group tutorials is insufficient. Data are accurate, readily available and used well to inform self-assessment in most areas. The self-assessment report correctly identifies most of the key strengths and improvements identified by inspectors. Close and frequent monitoring of improvement plans, together with a very thorough approach to performance management, has resulted in rapid improvements in nearly all subject areas. However, self-assessment occasionally under-estimates weaknesses and actions to rectify identified areas for improvement are insufficiently specific, especially in areas of underperformance. As a result, progress has been slower in these areas than that found elsewhere in the college.
39. Financial management is very strong. Managers have prioritised resources on improving teaching and learning and this is reaping benefits. Resources for learning are at least good and are excellent in a few areas. All staff benefit from well-organised and relevant continuous professional development. Thorough planning and robust financial procedures have enabled the college to build up substantial financial reserves. Overall, long course success rates have improved markedly since the last inspection. However, there remain inconsistencies and underperformance on some courses. Value for money is good.

## Subject areas

### Health public service and care

**Grade 2**

#### Context

40. The health and social care department offers programmes in early years and health and social care. A separate college department manages the access to HE and public services programmes. The college has 636 learners enrolled on full-time programmes in health and care, with an additional 146 on public services programmes and 66 on the access programme. An additional 62 learners are studying on the access to HE part-time provision. On Train to Gain programmes there are 211 learners, and 17 learners on apprenticeship programmes.

#### Key findings

- Success rates are high and improving. A high percentage of students successfully completed their programme in 2009/10. However, this masks variations and low success rates on several advanced programmes. On these programmes, pass rates were high but retention was poor. Success rates on Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes are high and improving. Current in-year retention is much improved and is now good.
- Standards of work are good and students make good progress, with most achieving at least their predicted grades. In the workplace, learners develop confidence, improve their work-related skills and often develop their roles, sometimes leading to promotion. The development of independent learning skills is particularly good, preparing students very well for university.
- Teaching and learning are good, with teachers generally providing sufficient challenge and interest in lessons. Students fully engage in interactive activities and make good use of the VLE, taking responsibility for their own learning. Teachers make good links to the workplace which extend students' understanding. Students sometimes behave poorly in sessions and tutors use insufficiently effective avoidance strategies.
- Assessment practice is good. Teachers assess learners using a wide range of appropriate methods in the workplace and have a good understanding of the process. Teachers structure assignments effectively to match students' needs and interests. Students receive detailed, constructive feedback that helps them improve.
- The range of provision is excellent. All aspects of the provision have clear progression routes and there is much choice for students. Additional programmes, such as drug awareness and first aid, prepare students very well for work and specific programmes prepare students exceptionally well for study at university. Students benefit greatly from varied and interesting enrichment activities that inspire them.

- Partnerships are outstanding. Students highly value work-placements and have a very good choice of experiences through extensive links with employers, schools, nurseries, community organisations and universities. These help to develop their workplace skills, improve knowledge about career options, and increase confidence, teamwork skills and an enthusiasm to learn. The department responds very well to the needs of its partners.
- Support for students has improved and is now good. Attendance and monitoring of progress are more rigorous and students receive effective additional learning support, particularly in targeted sessions where success rates have previously been low. Most students set themselves clear targets that personal tutors monitor closely. Guidance and support for university applications and ongoing careers guidance are particularly good.
- Leadership and management are good. The promotion of ambitious targets and high expectations throughout the department is outstanding. The department has recruited more co-ordinators who closely monitor provision where success rates have been poor. The setting of clear, challenging improvement targets is much improved.
- Learner and tutor awareness of safeguarding is good. Tutors feel well equipped to identify and report safeguarding issues and students have a good awareness of how to deal with issues in their workplaces and in their own lives. Within sessions, students fully consider the safety and well-being of their clients and know how to modify their own lifestyles to stay healthy and safe.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well. Students have a very good understanding of equality and diversity. In lessons, they enthusiastically discuss different aspects of equality. Efforts to improve the gender balance in this subject area have been successful, particularly in public services. Achievement gaps have been analysed and appropriate action has been taken to reduce them.
- Students express their views through a variety of means and they feel that the college listens to their opinions. They value the improvements made because of their feedback. Employers' views are collected but some would like more opportunities to contribute their views and ideas. Some students are not completely clear about where they should go to complain.
- Self-assessment is ongoing, inclusive, detailed and critical, leading to effective actions for improvement. The observation of teaching and learning is highly valued and results in an extensive programme of improvement. Tutors thoroughly reflect upon their practice. However, the analysis of provision by programme, student groups and levels has not sufficiently improved the management of poor behaviour in some sessions.

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

- Improve further the success rates of underperforming programmes by increasing the depth of analysis of what is occurring and paying particular attention to listening to and responding to learners' views.



- Further improve teaching and learning through promoting good behaviour in the classroom, by sharing good practice, better engagement of students in lessons and improving teachers' classroom management skills.

## Science and mathematics

## Grade 3

### Context

41. One-hundred and eighty-four learners study science and mathematics courses, the majority of whom are 16 to 18 year-olds on full-time courses. At intermediate level, the offer includes GCSE mathematics, full-time and part-time, and GCSE human physiology and health. AS courses are available in chemistry, human biology, mathematics and psychology. A-level courses are offered in chemistry, environmental studies, human biology, mathematics and psychology. There is also a national diploma course in applied science.

### Key findings

- Success rates are satisfactory overall. Success rates on AS science courses are inadequate. Success rate on AS mathematics improved dramatically in 2010 and are now very high. Success rates on the national diploma course are satisfactory.
- On A-level human biology and psychology, success rates have improved over the past three years and are now high. The success rate for A-level mathematics has improved significantly and is now high, but the success rate for A-level chemistry remains low.
- In 2009/10, learners generally progressed at a rate expected from their prior attainment. However, learners on AS mathematics made better progress than expected while progress for those taking AS psychology was poor. Current students of AS science and mathematics are consistently working at or above their target grades and making strong progress. Currently, retention on these courses is 93%.
- The proportion of learners achieving A\* to C grades in GCSE human physiology and health, and mathematics was above the national average in 2009/10 and in both cases was approaching 60%.
- Learners find the college a safe and welcoming environment and they enjoy their studies. Teachers reinforce and implement good health and safety practices during laboratory work which students replicate well. Students' behaviour is good. They have good attendance records and are generally punctual.
- Teaching and learning are good. The majority of teachers plan thoroughly and use a variety of activities and resources to capture and maintain students' interest and provide sufficient challenge. In most lessons, teachers check learning regularly. A minority of teachers use ILT particularly effectively, although too few teachers use it as an interactive resource. There is increasing use of the college VLE, which contains much good content.
- The assessment of students' work is satisfactory, but sometimes lacks explicit comments on how students could improve and make better progress. Personal tutors effectively monitor the progress of all students. Regular and productive

progress reviews result in challenging individual targets that focus on target grades and improvement. Regular reports keep parents fully informed.

- The range of provision is limited and currently does not include physics or further mathematics at advanced level. However, it is planned to introduce these subjects from September 2011. The range and take-up of suitably planned enrichment activities are improving. Good partnerships with local universities and schools facilitate progression to and from the college.
- Support for students is good. An academic and pastoral mentor follows up attendance issues and ascertains reasons for poor attendance. A contract is then drawn up to improve attendance where necessary. Other pastoral issues are also dealt with in a sensitive manner. Students appreciate the support given to them by the mentor and by other staff who are readily available to give additional help as required.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some good features. A wide range of strategies has been put in place to address underperformance, to develop teaching and learning further and to promote a culture of continuous improvement. Managers have not been in post for sufficient time to realise fully the impact of these strategies but there are early signs of a positive impact.
- Self-assessment is largely accurate in identifying the main strengths and areas for improvement. However, more rigour is needed in the interpretation of some data. Good practice is shared through forums and continuous professional development is focused on improving teaching and learning. Resources are outstanding.

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

- Raise success rates on AS science subjects and improve the progress made by students in these subjects by providing consistent challenge within teaching and learning, rigorous monitoring of students' progress and ensuring that students know what they need to do to achieve at least their target grades.
- Promote more effective use of ILT in lessons so that teachers make the most of its capacity to enhance learning and move away from projecting notes in bullet-point format.
- Extend provision in line with current plans to widen programme choices for students.
- Apply more rigour to the analysis of data for self-assessment by using the available analytical tools to give a more accurate account of the improvements being made.

## Engineering and manufacturing technologies

## Grade 2

### Context

42. Vocational courses are offered in motor vehicle, manufacturing, welding, electrical and electronics, at entry level through to HE, for full-time and part-time students. There are currently 679 full-time students, of whom 80% are aged 16 to 18 years. A further 110 students study part-time, with 45% aged 16 to 18. The majority of students are male, with 4% female on the full-time courses and 2% on part-time courses. A vocational school programme for 14 to 16 year-olds has 30 students, with a further 50 apprentices on employer-responsive provision.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good overall. Success rates are consistently high on the majority of programmes but low on foundation and intermediate vehicle maintenance and repair courses. Success rates are high on advanced apprenticeships, but poor retention has resulted in low success for apprentices. However, current in-year retention has improved significantly and is now good.
- Students develop good industrial skills, taught by teachers who are ex-practitioners with current industrial knowledge. Students benefit from the use of resources and equipment of an industrial standard. They demonstrate correct use of hand-tools and equipment and are able to complete tasks to industry standards with limited supervision.
- Health and safety are well embedded in all activities, from initial health and safety briefings to best industrial practice for different processes, tools and equipment. Students understand the reasons for, and consistently conform to, the mandatory wearing of personal protective equipment. Students say that they feel safe and that the college is a safe and supportive environment.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most teachers use varying techniques to engage and motivate students. In a minority of lessons, the good use of ILT includes graphics and animation to demonstrate complex principles. However, in a small proportion of lessons, students are not fully engaged; more able students are insufficiently challenged and checks on students' understanding are inconsistent.
- Assessment and verification are timely, accurate and fair. Work is clearly marked and returned promptly, with comments that students find helpful and which lead to improvement.
- Care, guidance and support for students are good. Initial advice and guidance effectively ensure that students are on the correct course and in receipt of appropriate support. The tutorial programme provides good support, with a structured programme of health and well-being sessions. Good use is made of attendance and punctuality data to monitor individual students and this is improving in-year retention rates.

- The range of provision is good. The comprehensive range of courses from entry level through to HE has clear progression routes between the levels. Progression is satisfactory. Work experience, an issue at the last inspection, is not a component part of all full-time engineering courses. Progress has been made but preparation for employment for some full-time students remains insufficient.
- Links with local employers, schools and other agencies are strong and well-established. There is an active employer forum that provides knowledge on the needs of local industry and a strong focus on the development of engineering skills. The recent initiative to engage in collaborative work with other training providers in the area is helping to co-ordinate training needs.
- Leadership and management are good overall. Communication is effective. Good use is made of data in the setting of challenging targets for all staff, which are rigorously reviewed. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and critically identifies areas for improvement with appropriate actions. Staff express confidence in the management and the supportive environment.
- Students work well together and show respect for each other regardless of their background or ethnicity. Anti-social behaviour is not accepted and is challenged immediately. Female student numbers are low and strategies to increase female participation have not been effective. There is a lack of facilities for females within engineering.
- Resources are good or better and they are well managed. They have benefited from investment across engineering, along with the new building. The workshops are extremely well maintained. A range of forums exists within the college for students to express their views. However, within engineering there are too few student representatives to provide an effective student voice for the range of courses.

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

- Increase success rates on underperforming courses by closely reviewing the recently extended strategies to support and monitor student retention and progress.
- Raise the standard of teaching and learning in the minority of classes where teachers provide insufficient challenge and do not check students' understanding consistently. Further develop the sharing of good practice to ensure that all students enjoy the same quality of learning experience.
- Further develop full-time students' preparation for employment in a commercial environment by monitoring employment-related activities and placement opportunities to ensure that they are accessible to all full-time students.
- Increase female participation in engineering by reviewing the recruitment strategy.
- Ensure that all students' views are represented by recruiting student representatives in engineering from a wider group and making sure that representatives are trained and understand their role.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

## Grade 2

### Context

43. The college offers a range of full-time courses from entry to degree level. These include full- and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and fashion retail. There are currently 428 full-time and 107 part-time students. Of these, 247 are 16 to 18 year-olds and 193 are aged 19 or over. Five-and-a-half per cent of students are male and 5% are from minority ethnic groups. Forty-two students are enrolled on apprenticeship programmes. Thirty-six 14 to 16 year-old pupils from local schools attend college courses.

### Key findings

- Success rates are outstanding at NVQ level 1 and level 3 and, although retention shows a declining trend at NVQ level 2, success rates remain high. The success rate on the college's first year of hairdressing Train to Gain provision is outstanding. In 2009/10 apprentices' success rates improved to very good, from satisfactory in the previous two years. The timely achievement of apprentices is outstanding.
- Students make good progress. Of those students who achieve their qualifications, 69% progress to higher levels of study. Students demonstrate a good standard of practical skills and a high level of professional standards in the salon environment and workplace. They are punctual and demonstrate good conversational skills with clients. Student gain confidence and self-esteem.
- The promotion of safeguarding, health and well-being is good. Through a well-designed tutorial system, students gain the necessary knowledge and understanding about the choices they can make that have an impact on their lifestyles and health.
- Teaching and learning are good, with outstanding aspects. In the majority of lessons, planned activities stretch and challenge all students. Teachers use information technology imaginatively, providing a wide variety of learning opportunities that help students to learn and develop good skills. Assessment and internal verification are thorough, well-planned and timely, allowing students to make good progress throughout their programme.
- In a minority of lessons, there is a lack of challenge and pace, particularly for the more able students. Some teachers miss opportunities to embed equality and diversity. For example, the effects of services and treatments on different skin types and hair textures and for people of different ages and gender are insufficiently discussed.
- The range of provision is outstanding and responsive to local needs, with programmes ranging from foundation to degree level. Programmes delivered in the workplace are flexibly planned to match employers' and students' work patterns. Students benefit from a wide range of additional qualifications and enrichment opportunities. Additional enterprise qualifications contribute to the development of good personal, social, business and teamwork skills.

- Partnership work is excellent, wide-reaching and instrumental in providing vocational training for disengaged young people. A well-attended employer forum has good representation to inform curriculum planning and ensure programme currency. Large numbers of employers work collaboratively with the college, providing good on-the-job experience and assessment opportunities. Employers and suppliers provide sponsorship and training.
- Students on foundation programmes benefit from a comprehensive range of support that includes team teaching by occupational and specialist staff, and individual focused support. At NVQ levels 2 and 3, the support is less comprehensive but is tailored to individual needs and provided by both the central support team and the vocational staff.
- Curriculum management is highly effective. Strong leadership and good channels of communication ensure that any underperformance benefits from good intervention strategies. The enthusiastic and committed staff have challenging targets for improvement which are well-monitored through frequent performance and quality reviews, and monthly course reviews.
- The area has a strong focus on the safeguarding of students and apprentices. Risk assessments are completed to ensure that students are safe. Students feel safe; staff actively promote the health and safety guidelines appropriate to industrial practice. All staff have completed the level 2 qualification in safeguarding, and students complete an awareness-raising course on contact dermatitis at induction.
- Equality and diversity are effectively promoted in tutorials and apprenticeship reviews. The 'respect' agenda has a high priority with staff and students. Any form of discrimination is challenged. Recent actions to improve the engagement of under-represented male students have led to improvement.
- The self-assessment report is largely accurate. However, the report insufficiently covers the declining success rates for NVQ at level 2. The self-assessment process is thoroughly embedded and very inclusive. Staff are fully involved in compiling the report's judgements and take responsibility for addressing any areas for improvement.

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

- Improve retention on level 2 courses by developing strategies to ensure a proactive approach to maintaining the current high-level of in-year retention and that prompt interventions are in place for 'at risk' students on all courses
- Improve teaching and learning by reviewing lesson planning to include strategies to improve pace and challenge. Support teachers to identify opportunities to embed equality and diversity within their lessons.
- Further develop aspects of self-assessment and quality improvement by the critical evaluation of trends and underlying detail.

## Leisure, travel and tourism

## Grade 2

### Context

44. Leisure, travel and tourism are divided between two directorates - sport and recreation, and travel and tourism - and provide courses for 450 students, of whom 80 are part-time. Courses range from entry to advanced level, with progression routes to degree level. Courses include travel and tourism, cabin crew training, sport and recreation, coaching, sport and exercise science, fitness instruction, and national certificates and national diplomas in sport and travel and tourism. The college also offers programmes in a range of short bespoke programmes for employers, including fitness instruction, personal training and customer service training.

### Key findings

- Success rates have improved over the last three years and are now high. Success rates for key and functional skills are outstanding; success rates for adult literacy and numeracy are also very high. On national certificates and diplomas, the progress made by students in relation to their qualifications at entry ranges from good to outstanding and shows an improved trend over a three-year period.
- Retention is good and improving. Progression rates are good, with many students moving on to a higher-level course. Students successfully develop good occupational, personal and social skills through a wide range of activities. Students feel safe at college; they demonstrate safe practices in the practical areas and welcome security arrangements.
- Students gain valuable experience through involvement in community projects. Students coach disabled children and have arranged a football competition in aid of a local charity. Travel and tourism students have organised fund-raising events for local children's community groups.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well to promote good learning and enjoyment. Classroom management is effective and a range of activities provides different types of learning to suit all students. Teachers enthusiastically plan imaginative and well-paced content that stimulates learning and student participation. However, there are some missed opportunities to discuss current issues relating to equality and diversity.
- The consistent good use of ILT enhances learning as teachers use it to explain theories and stimulate discussion. Assignments and a wide range of learning materials are available on the college's VLE, which students use extensively as a reference source.
- Assessment is regular and fair, with students receiving good supportive feedback on how to improve the quality of their work. Teachers plan assignment schedules carefully, providing opportunities for students to improve their grades. The area's enrichment activities are varied and numerous, and



contribute to the development of students' personal, social and employability skills.

- Partnerships are good in leisure and sport and satisfactory in travel and tourism. Leisure and sport students benefit from projects in partnership with the army, local authority, private health and fitness centres, Tees Valley Sport and local schools. Travel and tourism has good working partnerships with local employers, who provide students with occupational placements.
- Support for students is good. Specialist support tutors work effectively alongside occupational staff, providing bespoke support to individuals and general support where needed. Tutorial support is very effective and further enhanced by an electronic system, to which students and staff have access to monitor progress and set challenging targets.
- Leadership and management are good. Improvement strategies have been effective, leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, and improved success rates. All staff are suitably qualified and possess current industrial experience. Staff are appraised through an effective and challenging performance review which sets clear targets that are reviewed regularly.
- The promotion of safeguarding is strong and students are aware of whom to contact with any issues of concern. Students have a good understanding of equality and diversity. There is a culture of respect. A sports student has been selected to represent Great Britain at the Special Olympics World Championships and a tourism student won a competition for an equality and diversity promotion poster.
- Resources are good and effectively managed. They include an Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)-bonded travel agency, fully equipped gymnasium, sports hall and excellent facilities in classrooms and vocational learning areas. The self-assessment report is accurate and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Managers make good use of data to assess performance and identify improvement.

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

- Further develop the effective target setting and attendance initiatives to improve retention and success rates across all areas.
- Further develop partnerships within the local and regional travel and tourism industry to extend students' experience and give a high priority to local and regional tourism.
- Embed equality and diversity within all lessons, taking full advantage of related current affairs to develop and expand further students' knowledge and understanding.

## Literacy and numeracy

## Grade 2

### Context

45. The college offers a range of Skills for Life provision which includes key skills in communication and application of number at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, functional skills in maths and English at foundation and intermediate levels and adult literacy and numeracy, mainly for adult students, at entry, foundation and intermediate levels. At foundation level, students are required to take all three functional skills, while at intermediate level only one is taken, usually linked to the course requirements.

### Key findings

- Success rates are high, at or above national average across all areas. Success rates for key skills communication at intermediate level and application of number at foundation level are particularly high and 20% higher than the national rate. Success rates for functional skills in 2008/09 were well above the national average and, although lower last year, remain high. Apprentices also gain high success rates for key skills.
- Many students exhibit increases in confidence and skill, with improved literacy and numeracy skills supporting good achievements in vocationally related assignments and tasks. A minority of courses at intermediate level provide insufficient challenge for the more able and inadequate specific support for those at a lower achievement level. This hinders progress.
- Students feel safe; they state that the presence of security measures and personnel is reassuring. They are fully aware of how to report any concerns and are confident that resulting actions will be effective. Students value the health and well-being advice and guidance provided through the tutorial programme.
- Teaching overall is satisfactory. In good sessions, teachers plan differentiated learning materials and use interactive, relevant and interesting activities that relate appropriately to students' occupational courses. However, too many sessions pay insufficient attention to the wide range of ability within the group. Many teaching resources are excellent, but some focus solely on mathematics and English, with little occupational context.
- Good and frequent use is made of ILT and smart boards to illustrate, explain and involve students. Learning is effectively extended and reinforced through a good range of web-based resources. Equality and diversity are referenced in many lesson plans and, where appropriate, are highlighted in lessons.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough and facilitate the placing of students at the correct level. Assessment outcomes inform the setting of individual targets which are reviewed and amended regularly. However, the generic nature of the assessments does not sufficiently inform the particular requirements of the vocational areas.

- Support for students is good, with high levels of in-class and individual support. Skilled vocational and support staff support students' progress effectively, although specialist staff are sometimes replaced by vocational staff without the specialist knowledge needed to embed complex learning fully. In a minority of sessions, there is insufficient awareness of students' individual needs, resulting in a whole class approach, with an over-reliance on worksheets.
- Good partnerships with a range of employers support the Skills for Life needs of their workforce and trainees. Excellent communication and collaborative progress reviews help students to make progress and achieve. Links with schools, with the local authority and with a small number of innovative initiatives with a housing organisation and their residents are good.
- The college is developing a decentralised model for the Skills for Life provision, informed by a clear strategy and ambition. A strong, positive and co-operative culture exists across the provision, between the co-ordinators and vocational staff. Co-ordinators play a significant role in supporting and advising staff to develop functional skills and their reviews lead to realistic action planning.
- Quality assurance is good. Rigorous procedures for internal validation work effectively to improve the impact of marking and feedback. Observations of teaching and learning specifically focus judgements on what constitutes good practice. However, wider aspects of quality assurance against set performance criteria through all directorates remain underdeveloped.
- Eight directorates inform the self-assessment judgements and feature in realistic action plans. This results in a largely accurate picture which ensures further development and improvement. Current grades awarded by the college indicate increasing rigour and accuracy.

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

- Ensure that initial assessment leads to increased individual and contextualised approaches within teaching and learning that are directed at individual and vocationally-relevant achievement.
- Increase the number of appropriately qualified staff who understand the different needs of students and are able to address these while adhering to course requirements.
- Further develop quality assurance to ensure that all directorates adopt a standardised approach, according to common performance criteria which are shared by all staff and fully inform self-assessment.

## Information about the inspection

46. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and ten additional inspectors, assisted by the college's Assistant Principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
47. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students and employers. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the 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)**  
**Middlesbrough College**  
**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>					
Full-time learners	3,659	0	3,011	648	0
Part-time learners	2,338	134	367	1,282	555
<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>2</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?	3				
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?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	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?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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