

Southampton City College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130696

Name of lead inspector: Nigel Fletcher HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 March 2011

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: St Mary Street
Southampton
SO14 1AR

Telephone number: 0238 0484848

Information about the provider

1. Southampton City College is a medium-sized general further education college based on a main site in central Southampton. It also offers courses from a range of other local venues. Southampton, a unitary authority, has a population of nearly 240,000. Unemployment, at around 3.2%, is above the regional rate but below the national rate. Southampton is judged the 91st most deprived local authority according to the economic deprivation index. Around half of the college's young students come from the city's Priority Neighbourhood Areas.
2. The college's curriculum is almost wholly vocational, along with significant provision in basic skills, providing courses in twelve subject areas. These range from pre-entry to advanced level. In 2009/10 there were nearly 6,000 learners funded by the Hampshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC), of whom about a third were aged 16 to 18. The college also offers apprenticeships and programmes under Train to Gain. Around 340 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools attend vocational courses at the college. The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is 15%, which is slightly higher than for the population of Southampton. In 2010, the proportion of school leavers in Southampton with five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was 47.5% compared with the national average of 55.2%. The college's mission is to enable individuals and businesses to thrive and succeed.
3. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Avon Vale Training (engineering)
 - Babcock International Group (heavy vehicle)
 - Building Engineering Services Ltd (construction)
 - Construction Skills (construction)
 - COGNIS UK Ltd (mechanical engineering)
 - Isle of Wight Industrial GP TRG Services (boatbuilding and motor vehicle)
 - JTL (heating and ventilation)
 - Paragon Training Ltd (ICT and engineering)
 - PETA (fabrication and welding)
 - REMIT (motor vehicle)
 - Science and Technology Facilities Council (heating and ventilation)
 - Scottish and Southern Energy PLC (electrical engineering)
 - Southampton Engineering Training Association (engineering)
 - Southampton General Hospital (business administration)
 - West Berkshire Training Consortium (heating and ventilation).
4. The following organisations provides training on behalf of the college:
 - Chichester College (engineering)

- Eastleigh College (plumbing and gas)
- Highbury College, Portsmouth (gas)
- MYF Training Ltd (veterinary nursing)
- S & B Automotive Academy Ltd (heavy vehicle)
- Salisbury & District Value Cars Ltd (passenger delivery)
- Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust (health and social care)
- Sparsholt College (veterinary nursing)
- The Dental Nurses Tutoring Group (dental nursing).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to16</p> <p>Further education (16 to18)</p> <p>Foundation learning, including</p> <p>Entry to Employment</p>	<p>315 part-time learners</p> <p>1,328 full-time learners 413 part-time learners</p> <p>1,064 part-time learners</p> <p>197 learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)</p>	<p>305 full-time learners 3,940 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>487 learners 595 apprentices</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
---	----------------

Capacity to improve	Grade 2
----------------------------	----------------

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

Subject Areas	Grade
Health and social care	2
Engineering	2
Hairdressing and beauty	2
English for speakers of other languages	2

Overall effectiveness

- Southampton City College is a good college. It has some outstanding features, for example in the support it provides to students and in how it serves the local community. It demonstrates good capacity to improve and has made good progress in tackling weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. It has brought about significant improvements to outcomes, the quality of provision and to leadership and management. Although success rates for college-based students are now high, those for learners on work-based courses are satisfactory and vary across subjects.
- The proportion of good and outstanding lessons has increased and most students enjoy learning, although attendance at lessons is still satisfactory rather than good. Well-qualified and experienced teachers plan and manage lessons well. Students gain good knowledge and understanding. However, in a few instances, teachers pay insufficient attention to ensuring that all students are learning or understanding the work.

7. The college provides an excellent range of courses in response to the needs of its students and the local community. However, the college recognises that it needs to enhance its links with employers and to provide improved information on the programmes and progress of work-based learners. Guidance and support of students are outstanding overall. Excellent provision of learning support ensures that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are as successful in their studies as their peers.
8. The Principal and her senior team provide excellent vision and strategic direction. Students feel very safe in the college, reflecting the good promotion of safeguarding, although the impact of safeguarding information to employers is not monitored thoroughly. Quality-improvement arrangements, including the college's self-assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses, are good. The college provides managers and other staff with accurate and timely data on learners' achievements and progress and these are used well to secure improvements. The college has managed a recent full rebuild of its accommodation very well and provides outstanding value for money.

Main findings

- Outcomes are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection for students of all ages and at all levels. Improvements have resulted in high rates for both retention and achievement in most subject areas. Although retention rates are now high, attendance at lessons is still only satisfactory. Achievement and progression rates for students aged 14 to 16 are high.
- Success rates of learners on work-based programmes are satisfactory. Overall success rates and the rate at which they are achieved on time are high on Train to Gain programmes in health and social care and business administration, but low in manufacturing and accounting. Success rates for apprentices are satisfactory. Although they are low for advanced apprentices, current college data indicate a marked improvement.
- Students enjoy their studies and feel completely safe. They comment very positively about the security arrangements in the college and understand the importance of adopting safe working practices and healthy lifestyles. Students make good progress in lessons and develop effective skills for their future employment.
- Teaching and learning are good overall. Through effective staff development, the college has made a significant number of improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and to the lesson observation process. Qualitative and quantitative outcomes from observations are monitored effectively and reported frequently to senior managers who take positive steps to act upon them.
- Successful lessons are well planned to provide activities that meet individual needs effectively and teachers make very good use of their vocational and professional expertise. However, in a few lessons, questioning is too general to check learning effectively and information and learning technology (ILT) is used unimaginatively.

- The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is excellent, highly valued by users and supports high levels of interactive learning. Teachers improve and update the materials frequently and share good practice effectively. Students use the VLE effectively to enhance their learning and to catch up on any missed lessons.
- The college offers an outstanding vocational curriculum, with well-developed progression pathways and a variety of entry routes to meet a diverse range of students' needs. Provision is very clearly mapped to key business and industry needs in the area and to support students' progression into employment. The college develops its offer quickly and effectively to meet changing requirements.
- The college makes a significant contribution to the local community through its partnership strategy. It works well with a wide range of partners to enhance opportunity, participation, aspiration and achievement for its own students and for the wider population.
- The college has made significant progress in the development of links with employers to support the planning, delivery and assessment for college-based students. However, communications about work-based learners are not yet sufficient to enable employers to fully understand the requirements of the programmes, or how to support their learners.
- Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. They value highly the academic and pastoral support. The provision of additional learning support is excellent. The college's initial assessment leads to timely and incisive identification of particular needs and prompt attention and support. It has developed innovative approaches to supporting different types of need.
- Highly effective and inclusive leadership and management have significantly improved the college since the previous inspection. Financial management is good and the college provides excellent value for money. Staff are fully supportive of the common vision for the college's improvement. Equality and diversity are well promoted in this inclusive college.
- Arrangements to assure and improve the quality of provision are good. Self-assessment is thorough and accurate, with close attention given to the views of staff. However, insufficient emphasis is given to collecting and using the views of students and employers.
- The college acts well on students' comments and offers a broad range of opportunities for them to express their opinions. However, students have insufficient understanding of the ways to make their views known.
- The safeguarding of students is good, but the promotion of safeguarding to workplace providers requires further development.

What does Southampton City College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers follow a systematic, coherent and relentless approach to improving students' attendance at lessons.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by ensuring that all staff and college observers are better able to recognise and describe excellent lessons.
- Improve communications with employers of work-based learners to involve them more effectively in monitoring learners' performance and improving success rates.
- Improve the validity of self-assessment judgements and action planning for improvement by increasing the collection and use of students' and employers' views.
- Extend high-quality safeguarding to work-based learners by ensuring its effective promotion to employers and monitoring its implementation rigorously.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- how safe they feel in the college and the helpfulness and approachability of the security staff
- the lessons which are enjoyable and where they do lots of interesting activities
- the very supportive and enthusiastic teachers, tutors and assessors who care and make them feel valued
- the good accommodation and resources that help them learn
- the courses offered by the college
- the good access to computers and the materials on the college's virtual learning environment that help them catch up or develop their understanding
- the broad variety of enrichment activities, with good opportunities to go on trips, visits and useful and interesting work placements
- some very good lessons from teachers with good and relevant experience and subject knowledge.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the assessment opportunities for work-based learners
- contingency arrangements on a few courses for when staff are away
- communications between the college and employers for learners on work-based courses
- the refectory which has not been improved in line with the rest of the site
- access to social areas.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- how the quality of the apprentices has improved since the college took over their training

- the standard of their learners' work and the progress the learners now make
- the responsiveness of the college to employers' workforce needs
- the flexibility of the Train to Gain programmes
- the knowledge and expertise of the college staff
- the good support from the business development team.

What employers would like to see improved:

- communications by the college to employers of work-based learners and feedback regarding learners' attendance and progress
- the preparation of learners for the requirements of their Train to Gain programmes
- the information provided to employers on the structure of the Train to Gain programmes.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. Good leadership and management provide a secure basis for further development and quality improvement. Leaders and managers set high expectations and provide a clear strategic direction. Staff are involved fully in promoting a common vision for students' success and for the college's improvement. Students' views are listened to and acted upon, although they are not captured fully.
10. Arrangements to assure and improve the quality of provision are good. A comprehensive quality assurance system is well applied, whilst the college continues to ensure that best practice is always followed. Self-assessment is thorough and accurate, with close attention given to the views of staff, but with insufficient use of the views of students and employers. Good use of management information enables rigorous performance management.
11. Since the previous inspection, the key challenges then identified have been tackled appropriately. The college has sustained improvement in outcomes for students and the quality of provision, which are now good. The impressive improvements to the college estate directly support the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Managers and staff are clear about what still needs to be done to make further improvements.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Inspectors agree with the college's judgement that outcomes for students are good. Overall success rates have improved noticeably since the last inspection and are now significantly above the national average. Most students make good progress. Many students with low prior achievement overcome negative attitudes to education and a lack of confidence in learning to achieve their qualifications.
13. Successful management action has brought about significant improvements in both achievement and retention rates for long courses, which are above national averages, particularly for adults. However, although success rates for students on long courses at foundation and advanced levels are now high, those at intermediate level are just above the national average. Overall, the success rates of males and females in either age group, or between different minority ethnic groups, show little difference. Success rates for students with a disclosed learning difficulty and/or disability are similar overall to their peers. Attendance at lessons remains satisfactory.
14. Success rates for short courses remain high at around 95%. Achievement and progression to further training or employment are high for students aged 14 to 16. Success rates for work-based programmes have improved and are now satisfactory. Overall success rates for apprentices, and the rates at which they

achieve their qualifications, at level 2 are satisfactory. Although success rates for advanced apprenticeships are low, college data on retention and achievements indicate better progress in the current year. Success rates for Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory, but vary considerably by subject. Although rates for programmes in health and social care and business administration are high, those in manufacturing and accounting are low for Train to Gain learners.

15. Success rates have improved across nearly all subject areas, the majority of which are now well above recent national averages. However, success rates for courses in education and training declined in 2009/10 and are low. The college is embedding the learning of key skills into its vocational programmes successfully and success rates are high. The standard of students' work is good overall. This equips students well for further study or employment. Students develop good work-related skills which help them achieve economic well-being and progress well into further or higher education, or related employment.
16. Students enjoy college and feel extremely safe. They comment very positively about the college's security arrangements and particularly about the firm but approachable security staff. Attention to health and safety in lessons and practical activities is good. Students are well equipped to make informed choices about their own health and well-being. They value the college as a welcoming environment and speak favourably about the support they receive.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are good overall, as identified in the college self-assessment report. Since the previous inspection, the college has made significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning through focused staff development, and also to lesson observation arrangements. Qualitative and quantitative outcomes of lesson observations are monitored effectively and reported frequently to senior managers. Standards have risen year on year, and the college sets and meets challenging targets for increases in good or better teaching and learning outcomes. The college works hard to help teachers use themes of equality and diversity in their teaching. However, too many opportunities to do this are missed.
18. In the most successful lessons, planning to meet the needs of learners through interesting and challenging activities is clear and effective. Tasks in these lessons are closely related to learning objectives and outcomes. Students in the best lessons gain good knowledge and skills, and teachers make good use of their own professional and vocational expertise and experience. The most successful teachers use questioning skilfully to check understanding and progress and all learners are engaged and motivated by tasks. Information and communication technology (ICT) and specialist equipment are used relevantly and effectively to improve learning.
19. In the minority of less successful lessons poor planning means that individual needs are unmet. Teachers have not considered sufficiently how to involve and

challenge all learners. Where lessons are less interesting and effective there is often little or unimaginative use of ILT; teachers have insufficient understanding of how each activity or stage of the lesson contributes to learning objectives, and links between sections of lessons are not effective. Questioning is general or directed at only a few individuals in the class.

20. Written assessments meet awarding body requirements where appropriate. Most teachers provide useful feedback on written work, and return marked assignments promptly. Many teachers are skilful in their use of comments to help learners understand how to improve work or secure higher grades. Initial assessment is effective in placing students on appropriate courses at the correct level.
21. The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is excellent and is highly valued by users. Staff and students make very effective use of technologies in high levels of interactive learning. An effective monitoring system grades subject areas on the quality and quantity of VLE usage. Teachers make good efforts to improve and update the materials they place on the VLE, and readily share good practice. The college learning centre is well regarded, and well used. It provides students with a good range of resources and areas to work and learn.
22. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interest of students is outstanding. It offers a broad vocational curriculum, with well-developed progression pathways and a variety of entry routes to meet a diverse range of student needs and to build upon their previous achievement and experience. Provision is very clearly mapped to key business and industry needs in the local area and planned well to support the development of students' employability skills and to enhance progression.
23. The college offers a range of courses for adult students, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in community locations. This provides opportunities for more socially and economically isolated students, and supports their progression into further learning. It provides a good vocational curriculum to meet a diverse range of needs of pupils from local schools. The college has recently introduced a well-planned foundation level programme (City Horizons) designed to meet more effectively the progression needs of students at entry and foundation levels. All subject areas provide meaningful work experience in a variety of forms for vocational students.
24. Qualifications in addition to the main programme of study are available to enhance progression opportunities into higher education and employment. For example, advanced level construction students are able to study art and design units to support their ability to study architecture at university. In response to feedback from students, A-level mathematics is being introduced in engineering and professional construction to supplement the national diplomas and enhance the range of students' higher education options.
25. Since the previous inspection, the college has extended the range of enrichment options available and increased students' participation. Departments provide a

good range of curriculum-specific enrichment which has a high level of student participation. The college has developed and sustained good and effective partnerships with schools, the local authority, the local community and other organisations, within which it takes a significant, and in some cases, leading role. Partners speak very highly of the college's flexibility and responsiveness.

26. The college has made significant progress in the development of links with employers since the previous inspection. These links are being used increasingly to support the planning, delivery and assessment for college-based students, as well as to inform the development of services to employers. However, the college does not yet provide sufficient information to employers of work-based learners about the programmes and employers' roles in supporting their learners.
27. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The college offers extensive pre-course advice and guidance to help students choose the course which best meets their needs and interests. Arrangements for transition from school to college are good and induction arrangements enable students to settle into college and their course quickly and supportively.
28. Students place very high value on the academic and pastoral support they receive, formally and informally, from their teachers, tutors and other staff. Individual personal tutorials provide regular opportunities for students to discuss academic progress and agree meaningful improvement targets with their tutors. This is supported by a well-developed online student performance tracking and reporting system. Tutors make effective use of the flexibility of the tutorial system to tackle promptly any emerging issues of concern and relevance to students.
29. Provision of additional support is excellent. The college's initial assessment enables timely and incisive identification of learning support needs, for which arrangements are made and implemented promptly. The college has taken an innovative approach to meeting some types of need, for example the development of nurture groups to help students with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to become more effective learners.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

30. Highly effective and inclusive leadership and good management of change have moved the college forward in many areas since the previous inspection. The Principal and senior leadership team, working closely with governors, promote very successfully a clear vision and strategic direction for the college, where students and the wider local community, as well as raising aspirations, are at the heart of its work.
31. Students' success rates overall are now well above the national averages for similar colleges, teaching and learning are good, and all of the key areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been suitably addressed. At the same time, the college has improved its buildings and resources significantly.

32. Curriculum management is mainly good, although it is satisfactory for provision of apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes. Management arrangements are clear, reviewed routinely, evaluated and understood by staff. Open and consultative management involves staff in the development of a college culture where they are able to make their own decisions in the best interests of students.
33. Governance of the college is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Governors understand their roles well. They provide critical support for managers, set challenging targets for improvement and have successfully embraced the review of quality and standards in their work. They are a valuable resource for the college. Governors are concerned to reduce the recent high turnover rate of members.
34. The safeguarding of students is good. Government requirements for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults are met fully. The college's arrangements are thorough and detailed. Criminal Records Bureau and List 99 checks are up to date and centrally recorded. A proactive and expert central safeguarding team ensures that reported incidents are dealt with appropriately. Training is comprehensive and up to date. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities. The college identifies correctly that the promotion of safeguarding to employers requires further development and is satisfactory. Health and safety arrangements are very thorough.
35. Equality and diversity are well promoted in this inclusive college. The senior leadership team sets high expectations for the work of the active and influential equality and diversity panel. The work of the equality and diversity adviser was extended last year, providing a significant additional management resource for the promotion of equality and diversity and the monitoring of the detailed action plan. The college's single equality scheme and its impact assessments are thorough and current. Training and briefing for all staff are frequent and comprehensive. Data for different equality and diversity categories of students are used effectively to help inform action plans, quality improvement and course development. The college celebrates extensively the achievements and diversity of its students.
36. The college acts well on students' comments. Students have various opportunities to express their views and influence their life in college, including student surveys. Many do so, but students' understanding of the opportunities they have to contribute to the 'learner voice' and to the college's self-assessment process is insufficient. For example, their understanding of the role of student ambassadors and how to make use of them is mixed. The involvement of employers to help design programmes and to support and promote improvement is proceeding well, but remains underdeveloped.
37. Arrangements to assure and improve the quality of provision have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Clear quality assurance and improvement processes, which are well documented and managed, lead to

good self-assessment and actions for improvement. The college continues working to improve the consistency and the sharpness of evaluations and resulting actions. The good use of readily available student data contributes to the greater security of self-assessment judgements.

38. Financial management is good. Outcomes for learners are good, as is the quality of teaching and learning. The standard of accommodation and resources is high and college buildings are energy efficient. The college's property strategy is significantly improving the quality and efficient use of the college estate. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Many take part in an excellent range of training and professional development activities to support their continuing professional development. Consequently, the college achieves outstanding value for money.

Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 2

Context

39. The college offers full- and part-time courses from foundation level to higher education in health, social care, child care, dental nursing and counselling. Over 1,000 learners are enrolled on further education courses. The majority of these are on part-time courses. Of the 178 full-time students, 134 are aged 16 to 18. Work-based provision includes around 95 learners on Train to Gain programmes, 27 apprentices and 30 advanced apprentices.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good overall. Success rates are outstanding on intermediate level programmes including counselling and health and social care. However, success rates on a small number of advanced level programmes are low. Current students are making good progress. Success rates on Train to Gain provision and advanced apprenticeships have improved and are above national averages. Success rates for apprentices are satisfactory.
- Students enjoy their learning, especially in group work. Most students complete their courses. New measures have been introduced that include more robust entry requirements, taster work placements during induction, and tighter monitoring by tutors using electronic individual learner plans. Attendance is monitored closely and students are supported well to deal with any problems. Students feel very safe at the college.
- Students develop good skills in carrying out risk assessments and in promoting health and well-being. Students in childcare gain good skills in encouraging children's development through play and implementing effective safeguarding arrangements. Health and social care students develop good skills in working sensitively with vulnerable people.
- The standard of students' written work is generally good and students take pride in their achievements. The standard of work of learners on Train to Gain programmes is satisfactory. Good progression routes enable students to move easily to appropriate employment or to further and higher education. Students' employability and their understanding of the care industry are greatly increased.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are mostly good. Students appreciate the open plan teaching areas and develop good skills in undertaking independent research and designing presentations using ICT to enhance their learning. Communication with employers is good on college-based courses. However, learners and employers on work-based programmes are not informed sufficiently about assessment requirements and their learning responsibilities.
- Individual learning plans are used well to differentiate learning styles and teaching methods. Interesting activities are well planned to inspire and challenge students and are linked appropriately to workplace activities and

placements. Teachers are very experienced and enthusiastic. Technology is used very effectively to support learning and is focused well on the preferred learning styles of students.

- Feedback on written work for college-based courses is comprehensive, detailed and constructive. Students are confident in knowing how to improve and have personal learning and employment goals recorded and monitored. On Train to Gain programmes, learners receive supportive feedback in assessments that highlight their strengths with areas for improvement including clear targets with deadlines for completion.
- The wide range of courses and progression opportunities meets the needs and interests of students and employers well. However, at fewer than 4%, males are under represented on programmes. Good links exist with a wide range of employers who provide good-quality work placements and provide guest speakers. Assessment and training methods are very flexible and include online programmes and personalised workplace delivery.
- Care, guidance and support are very good. College-based students receive good support to improve their literacy and numeracy, but this is not always provided quickly enough for work-based learners. Students with complex personal issues or learning needs have been enabled to succeed through prompt and sensitive support. Students' progress is well supported through effective group tutorials.
- Leadership and management are good. Course teams strive for outstanding provision. The performance of each course is monitored and evaluated regularly. Staff are clear about their contribution to the overall vision and clear targets are set. Data are used well to focus on improvement and resources are used effectively to support learning. Staff benefit from excellent professional development.
- Safeguarding is promoted very effectively during students' induction and throughout the curriculum. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and is well integrated in the curriculum, which promotes the discussion of both personal and professional experience and practice. However, the understanding by a few students of workplace practices that can promote diversity is too limited.
- Staff play a key role in developing the quality improvement plan which is detailed and monitored regularly. Self-assessment is largely accurate and staff are well involved in the process. However, employers are not sufficiently consulted in this process and are not fully aware of the college's vision and strategy for the future.

What does Southampton City College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the guidance to learners and employers on work-based programmes to ensure their full understanding of the programme requirements to enable them to maximise opportunities for improving learning and assessments.
- Further develop and implement strategies to improve the timeliness of literacy and numeracy support for work-based learners to improve their ability to progress in employment.

- Explore and develop strategies to increase the number of males on health and social care programmes.

Engineering

Grade 2

Context

40. The college offers programmes ranging from foundation to higher levels across a wide range of specialist areas. Of the 729 students on engineering programmes, 593 are on full- or part-time college-based programmes. Of these, 76 are aged 14 to 16, 313 are 16- to 18-years-old and 204 are adults. Of the 136 learners on apprenticeship programmes, 98 are advanced apprentices. Additionally, 35 learners follow Train to Gain National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes at levels 2 or 3.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good overall. Success rates on most college-based courses are at, or above, national averages with the exception of the advanced certificate in vehicle maintenance and repair for which the success rate in 2009/10 was low. Key skills have been successfully embedded in the vocational courses with the result that success rates are now high.
- Outcomes for work-based provision are satisfactory. Success rates for apprentices have risen consistently since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Success rates for advanced apprentices declined in 2009/10 to below national averages, but college data indicate that outcomes will be at least satisfactory in the current year.
- Teachers maintain a strong focus on safe working practices with training tailored to the course requirements and to maintain industry standards. Students comment that they feel very safe both in the college and at work, and express confidence in their ability to determine and challenge unsafe working practices if necessary.
- Teaching and learning are good. A broad range of activities and effective use of ILT are used to promote group work, individualised learning and to develop strong practical engineering industry skills. In a few lessons teachers use insufficient questioning strategies to check individual students' understanding or to promote reflective practice.
- The standard of students' work is good and demonstrates sound understanding of engineering principles. Portfolios are well organised and meet awarding-body requirements. However, they do not allow students to demonstrate their full range of skills sufficiently. Too often, feedback is not detailed enough to indicate how students could improve further.
- The range of provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of a wide range of students and employers, with provision from foundation to higher levels across a wide range of specialist engineering areas. Appropriate pathways for progression with additional units or modules provided where necessary, match the students' aspirations and ambitions well. Students frequently progress to higher education.

- Students receive good initial advice and guidance to enable them to make informed choices about potential careers in engineering. Students value the support and guidance they receive from their teachers, tutors and support staff. Training consultants and assessors support the students well in the workplace. They are very flexible in arranging visits to fit learners' work patterns and personal circumstances.
- Employers comment very positively about the flexibility of the college's provision and how the standard of training has had a positive impact on their business. Whilst recent improvements in communication with employers respond to individual students' concerns, feedback to employers about their learners' attendance and progress is not yet regular or effective enough.
- Leadership and management are good. Effective communication across all levels of the department has resulted in a sound awareness of college priorities and has led to improvements across the subject area. In work-based provision, the increased focus on retention and timely achievements has resulted in significantly improved in-year retention rates when compared to the same period in the previous year.
- The department's response to equality and diversity is good. Managers analyse data well to identify gaps in attainment and have successfully remedied a previous underperformance by young white male students. The college is working well with partner organisations to improve the recruitment of students from under represented groups. However, work-based learners' progress reviews do not promote diversity sufficiently.
- Self-assessment is self-critical and improvement planning has identified effectively actions that have led to improved success rates. Managers review course performance well through the use of targets for students' recruitment and retention and lesson observation judgements. However, employers' views are not sought effectively or included in the self-assessment process.

What does Southampton City College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of questioning in lessons so that students are encouraged to answer with greater detail and to reflect more on what they are learning.
- Improve communications with employers to involve them more effectively in the monitoring their learners' performance and to gain their views to better inform the self-assessment process.
- Ensure that existing good practice is shared more effectively to improve the quality of feedback in learners' NVQ portfolios.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 2

Context

41. The college offers full- and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels in beauty therapy and in hairdressing. Of the 457 students following courses in these subjects, 76 are aged 14 to 16 and are from local schools, 237 are aged 16 to 18 and 132 are adult learners. Part-time provision has 122 learners and 12 learners are apprentices.

Key findings

- Outcomes overall are good. They are good in hairdressing and satisfactory in the smaller beauty therapy provision. Although success rates in 2009/10 were satisfactory for NVQ beauty courses at intermediate and advanced levels and low at foundation level, college data now suggest much improved performance. Success rates for 14- to 16-year-old students are outstanding, but low for the small number of hairdressing apprentices.
- Students display high standards of written and practical work and develop positive attitudes to their studies. Students have high standards of appearance and maintain professional standards that increase their chances of employment. Progression from one level of programme to another and to employment is good. Success rates between different student groups show no discernable differences.
- Students develop extremely safe working practices. Staff continually promote health and safety, protecting students and clients. Students' well-being and healthy lifestyles are well promoted in tutorials and lessons. Students receive good support, helping them make safe choices, understand their rights and feel extremely safe in college. Students frequently undertake charitable fundraising.
- Teaching, learning and assessments are good. Teachers plan lessons well, using a variety of activities and electronic resources that help to maintain students' interest. Resources are of high quality. Students' understanding is regularly checked and feedback is constructive. Students participate and contribute well to lessons. Students readily use computers without prompting, both within and between classes, to research and write up work.
- Staff are appropriately qualified and have good, often current, industrial experience that benefits students. The monitoring of students' progress is very effective. Teachers set students a range of targets for every lesson and these are usually met. They meet regularly with students to review progress, using effective strategies such as extra training or assessment opportunities to ensure good progress.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of students very well with internal progression opportunities from foundation to higher levels, and externally to higher education. Courses are offered flexibly when required. Beauty students benefit from opportunities to take short specialist courses. Hairdressing students

can undertake barbering or African-Caribbean options. All students undertake work experience. Many students progress to employment.

- Links with employers and manufacturers are good and several organisations participated in a successful industry week coinciding with inspection. This annual event raises students' aspirations, creativity and awareness of employment and other progression opportunities. Several part-time students gained employment during the event. Effective links are maintained with partner schools.
- Care, guidance and support of students are good. Tutors have profiles of each student they teach, indicating specific ways in which they can be supported. Students feel well supported by staff for pastoral issues, higher education advice and other progression opportunities. A very small number of part-time adult students are placed unsuitably on foundation programmes.
- Leadership and management are good. Productive staff meetings take place with a focus on meeting the needs of students and monitoring progress. Managers have taken effective action to improve retention. Target setting for staff is effective. Punctuality and attendance are monitored closely and are good. Tutors telephone or text absent students. Safeguarding, including e-safety, is well promoted in lessons.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good, supported by thorough lesson planning. However, the subject area has been unsuccessful in recruiting male staff. Good use is made of visual images in learning and in promotional materials. Students' knowledge of attending to clients' individual needs for salon treatments, whether for a disability or religious preference, is good.
- Self-assessment reports are evaluative, self-critical and mainly accurate. Staff are included well in the report's development and good use is made of students' views. The quality improvement plan is reviewed regularly resulting in several examples of improvements being made that benefit students. Observations of learning lead to improved practice and staff readily share good practice across the teams.
- Value for money is good. Students develop good work skills and gain additional qualifications that aid employment. Accommodation for hairdressing and beauty therapy is of a good standard and used extensively, including evenings and weekends. The department places a strong emphasis on recycling and energy efficiency. Products are used from sustainable manufacturers.

What does Southampton City College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates on beauty therapy programmes and hairdressing apprenticeships by rigorous monitoring of individual students' performance and better use of targeted support.
- Review current provision to ensure more appropriate progression routes for all adult hairdressing learners.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

Grade 2

Context

42. Currently, 475 ESOL students study at the college. Of these, 17% are aged between 16 to 18 and the rest are adults. Courses are offered from entry to intermediate level, in the day and evening at the college's main centre. The majority of provision is part time, accredited and at entry level.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates are higher for adults than younger students. However, success rates on the literacy elements at the lowest entry level are low. Most students complete their courses. Although, in previous years, too few students achieved all elements of the ESOL qualification, pass rates for current students show a significant improvement.
- Students develop a good range of language and employability skills. In addition to language, they successfully achieve additional awards in employability and personal development. The standard of students' work is good and students make good progress. They use their newly-acquired skills to function better in the community, support their children with homework and gain employment.
- Attendance is satisfactory and improving steadily. The attention to monitoring attendance is good. Late cards are issued, text messages are sent to absent students, and improvement targets set in individual learning plans, which are all closely checked at progress review meetings. Extra learning sessions are provided for adults to ensure they have opportunities to complete missed work.
- Students feel very safe in the college. They appreciate the strict but fair security arrangements. Teachers make safety in classroom settings a priority in their lesson planning. An inclusive and collaborative learning environment is created and diverse student groups work well together. Staff are adequately trained in safeguarding and fully aware of how to respond to any concerns raised by students.
- Teaching and learning are good. Planning is detailed and thorough and much attention is placed on meeting individual needs. Students enjoy learning, are actively involved and keen to participate. In one lesson, young students discussed the challenging topic of multiple intelligence and increased their understanding and knowledge of different learning styles.
- In a minority of lessons, creative and imaginative use of ILT is not evident and teachers place too much dependency on paper and nationally-produced resources. The focus on accuracy and correction of students' errors in lessons is insufficient and not enough attention is placed on students knowing what they need to do to further improve their language skills.
- Assessment of learning is good. Individual learning plans contain particularly specific and measurable learning targets which are reviewed regularly. They are used well to monitor progress and record achievement. Although initial

diagnostic assessment is used well to support individual students, it is used insufficiently to inform group activities.

- The range of provision is good and responsive to the needs and interests of the diverse groups in the local community. Internal progression within ESOL is good with many students moving up through levels. Progression to other college courses has improved and is satisfactory. A good range of enrichment activities are offered, including a community skills sharing club, and volunteering.
- Productive partnerships have been developed with schools, community organisations and voluntary organisations to increase collaboration and referrals to the college. Effective partnerships with other providers, specialist agencies and organisations assist with joint planning and establishing provision across the city.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Students welcome the enhanced individual support offered by tutors and the college's student advisers. Tutorials for young people are effective and focus on reviewing learning and monitoring attendance. Information, advice and careers guidance are satisfactory. Good use is made of dedicated learning support in lessons.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. In the better lessons, teachers plan for and integrate equality and diversity topics in lessons. They incorporate naturally occurring examples on differences in their teaching and learning. The performance of different ethnic groups and by gender is analysed and used well to secure future improvements.
- Curriculum management is good, enabling joint working, good communication and the sharing of good practice. Much progress has been made on ensuring improvements since the last inspection, such as in the use of data, staff training and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The self-assessment report and related quality improvement plan are thorough and analytical and identify accurately the strengths and required improvements.

What does Southampton City College need to do to improve further?

- Focus more on accuracy and correction in lessons so that students are fully informed about what they need to do to improve their language skills.
- Ensure that all teachers have the expertise to be able to meet fully the needs of students without the basic literacy skills.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring more creative and imaginative use of ILT.

Information about the inspection

43. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the college's director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
44. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students and employers. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Southampton City 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	1,822		1,635	187	
Part-time learners	3,176	338	168	1,867	803
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	3
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	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>	2				
Quality of provision	2				
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
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?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1				
Leadership and management	2				
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
<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?	3				
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?	1				

*where applicable to the type of provision

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090105

© Crown copyright 2011