

Dearne Valley College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130529

Name of lead inspector: Patrick Geraghty HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

Address: Manvers Park
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 7EW

Telephone number: 01709 513333

Information about the provider

1. Dearne Valley College serves the communities of south-east Barnsley, south-west Doncaster and north Rotherham. Many learners are identified as coming from areas of high social and economic deprivation. Within the college's catchment area in 2010, the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, was below the national average. In 2009/10 around 4% of learners enrolled at the college identified themselves to be of minority ethnic heritage, which corresponds to the local average. The college currently has over 1,500 16 to 18 year-old students and more than 1,000 adult learners. Over 300 school pupils aged 14 to 16 attend college courses. Nearly 75% of learners are on courses at entry, foundation and intermediate levels. Provision of full-time and part-time higher education (HE) programmes has expanded with approximately 115 full-time learners currently enrolled. Most of the provision in the college is funded by either the Skills Funding Agency or the Young People's Learning Agency.
2. Provision is substantially on two sites: the larger campus at Manvers Park and the smaller site established in the centre of Wath-upon-Dearne. The college provides courses in most subject areas. The most significant areas of work are in: health, public services and care; construction; retail and commercial enterprise; leisure, travel and tourism; and preparation for life and work. The college has developed its apprenticeship provision in response to the identified shortage of training providers in the Dearne Valley.
3. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the college. Construction; information and communication technology (ICT); literacy and numeracy; and business, administration and law were inspected in depth.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Bentley Training DMBC
 - Envisage
 - Optimas
 - Quality Care Partnership

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2009/10
Young learner provision: 14–16 Further education (16–18) Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment (E2E)	342 learners 1,351 full-time learners 257 part-time learners 809 full-time learners 64 part-time learners
Adult learner provision: Further education (19+)	160 full-time learners 1,172 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	365 learners 123 apprentices
Informal adult learning	244 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 3
Capacity to improve		Grade 3
Aspect	Grade	
Outcomes for learners	3	
Quality of provision	3	
Leadership and management	3	
Safeguarding	2	
Equality and diversity	2	
Subject areas	Grade	
Construction	2	
Information and communication technology	3	
Literacy and numeracy	3	
Business, administration and law	2	

Overall effectiveness

5. This is a satisfactory college. In 2009/10 success rates across foundation, intermediate and advanced courses declined to or below the national average. This decline was largely due to poor retention. College data indicate that retention has improved in response to more focused strategies and interventions. The new Principal has introduced changes to performance management and quality assurance systems which are beginning to have an impact on outcomes. However, there remain too many inconsistencies in practice and performance. Overall standards observed by inspectors were satisfactory. Progression rates from foundation to intermediate courses are high but are low from intermediate to advanced courses. Progression to HE is good. Achievement for trainees on many apprenticeship courses is too low. Progress for learners in literacy and numeracy courses is, at best, only satisfactory.
6. Too much teaching is satisfactory and lacks sufficient variety and focus on learning activities. The college system for observing and improving teaching and learning has too many inconsistencies across the provision. In a number of subject areas insufficient observations are carried out and analysis and evaluation are not robust. The sharing of good practice is not formalised. The

curriculum is satisfactory. The college acknowledges the need to reflect more actively local community needs in developing apprenticeships and wider provision in areas such as business, administration and law, and literacy and numeracy. Partnerships are good and are having an increasing impact on improving outcomes. Care, support and guidance are good. Additional learning support is effective and those in receipt of this support achieve better than their peers.

7. The new, re-structured senior management team has established a firm direction and clear improvement agenda. However, the college acknowledges the need to tackle inconsistencies in the application of college quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation systems. Data are accurate but not always used sharply to drive improvement. Governors are holding senior managers to greater account. Procedures to safeguard learners are good as is the promotion of equality and diversity. The college's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates declined in 2009/10 but current evidence indicates that most are now in line with national benchmarks. For learners aged 16 to 18, success rates are generally in line with the national average. Success rates for adult learners and students on vocational courses are satisfactory. Overall apprenticeship success rates are below the national average. Success rates for short courses are high. The college acknowledges the need to improve progression and success rates on literacy and numeracy courses.
- Learners make satisfactory progress overall. There is no discernible variation in performance between different groups. Learners' progression to HE is good. Learners' progress from foundation to intermediate courses is also good. Progression between intermediate and advanced level courses is low. Learners receiving additional learning support achieve better results than other learners.
- Learners use safe working practices and feel secure and confident within the college's supportive environment. Attendance is satisfactory overall but low in some subjects. Learners enjoy college and are well informed about healthy lifestyles. Some participate in a wide range of enrichment and community activities. Learners' participation in college representative groups and bodies is underdeveloped.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory but the quality varies significantly across the college and within subject areas. In good lessons teachers use well-planned learning resources to engage and challenge learners. However, too many lessons are teacher-led and teaching fails to engage and challenge learners fully. Workplace assessors make insufficient use of technology to enhance assessment. Arrangements to identify and share good and best practice are not formalised sufficiently across the provision.
- The initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is now carried out prior to enrolment for most learners. This change has facilitated the provision of better targeted and prompt support for those in need of extra help. However, teachers

do not make effective use of this information to provide a variety of learning activities and resources to challenge all learners.

- Arrangements for observing teaching and learning are not sufficiently effective in promoting improvement. Enhanced lecturers have not been provided with sufficient training to evaluate rigorously the impact of teaching on learners' progress. The actions identified from observations are not always clear enough to help teachers to improve.
- The breadth of curriculum provision is satisfactory. Some recent additions to the curriculum offer have enabled greater flexibility and accessibility onto appropriate courses for more learners. Not all curriculum areas have suitable progression pathways. The provision for employer-based programmes is underdeveloped.
- The college's partnership working is good and enhances the learners' experience. Effective partnerships have been developed with schools and other community organisations. Leaders promote their strategic vision for the college, as a college serving the needs of the local communities, very effectively. The college is a valued partner in many local partnerships to promote economic and social well-being.
- Learners are well supported. Good central services provide a broad range of support. The college works well with external agencies whose expertise complements the college's effective care. However, learners on employer-based provision do not access central support facilities and services.
- Leaders have established a clear strategic agenda to raise standards and support learners to achieve their full potential. However, quality assurance systems are applied inconsistently. Self-assessment is not sufficiently robust. Data are not used precisely enough to inform and aid improvement. The college has made insufficient progress since the previous inspection. Governance is good and now provides appropriate challenge to senior managers.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Equality and diversity are given a high priority. Central to the college ethos is the establishment of an inclusive environment. Data are used well to monitor equality and diversity and significant achievement gaps have been narrowed. Learners feel safe at the college and the college's arrangements for safeguarding are good.
- Resources for learning are generally good across both college sites. Financial management is good. Set against outcomes, value for money is satisfactory.

What does Dearne Valley College need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and retention rates and the progress that learners make so that underperforming courses, including apprenticeships, are reduced significantly by 2012. In particular, improve success and progression rates on literacy and numeracy courses to tackle more effectively the barriers to learning, success and progression.
- Increase apprentice success rates through more timely and relevant functional and key skills development and assessment.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by enabling teachers to use information from initial assessment to plan more successfully a wider range of appropriate learning materials and activities.
- Review, evaluate and implement improved arrangements for observing teaching and learning that measure the impact of teaching on learners' progress and the standards they reach in relation to their targets. Provide better training to enable managers to carry out lesson observations.
- Develop progression pathways for learners in curriculum areas where there are gaps, in response to employers' needs and local and national priorities.
- Improve the use of data to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the achievement and progress of learners across all courses and feed the results of such evaluation into action planning for improvement.
- Improve the college's capacity to identify and rectify inconsistencies in the application of college management and quality assurance procedures. In particular, improve the rigour and accuracy of self-assessment and reinforce its application as a central device for the evaluation and improvement of provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the safe and friendly environment and the very welcoming and supportive tutors
- the culture of respect between staff and learners
- not being judged, just helped
- good feedback on assessments by tutors and the positive way assessors work with employers
- good guidance and support in applying for higher education
- additional learning support including dyslexia support
- the good resources, especially in sport and construction, and the good virtual learning environment
- free car parking.

What learners would like to see improved:

- communications on course organisation from teaching staff
- the organisation of work placements
- more outdoor activities and additional trips and visits
- the relevance of key skills to vocational studies
- more courses in the community
- the timetabling of key skills.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way in which college staff fit their work around business needs and do not disrupt normal working practices
- the professional way in which college staff carry out their work
- the knowledge that their staff gain, which enables them to perform well in their work roles
- the good communication with assessors
- helpful staff who provide employees with excellent and friendly support
- receiving good quality training from a local college
- knowledgeable college staff.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the number of staff changes which disrupted employees' programmes
- staff who fail to attend planned appointments without notification
- the length of time it takes to get completed portfolios back at the end of the programmes.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. Quality assurance systems, including self-assessment, are satisfactory but they have been insufficiently effective in producing improvement. New management arrangements, including performance management, are starting to improve systems and outcomes for learners. Although the college has made insufficient progress since the previous inspection, there has been improvement. Overall college success rates and those for entry and intermediate level courses improved significantly until 2009/10, when retention fell markedly. Retention is now improving in the current academic year. Significant differences in learners' performance across different groups have been narrowed. The college has increased the profile for healthy eating initiatives. Management information and its use and analysis have improved but still lack the razor-sharp application needed to drive improvement. The quality of accommodation and resources has continued to improve since the last inspection. Teaching and learning have not improved because too many inconsistencies remain across subject areas.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Success rates declined significantly in 2009/10 due mostly to a marked fall in retention rates. Strategies to tackle falling success rates are now in place and current evidence indicates an improvement in retention rates to at, or just above, the national average for foundation- and intermediate-level courses. Success rates on advanced-level courses remain slightly below the national average for both 16 to 18 year-olds and adult learners. Achievement rates are satisfactory. For trainees on apprenticeship programmes, overall achievement is low as is the completion of programmes within agreed timescales. Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory and improving. There is no discernible variation in performance across different groups. Success rates on short courses are high.
10. Progression rates between foundation and intermediate courses are high. The college is making good inroads in promoting successful applications to HE in an area with traditionally very low progression rates. Progression rates between intermediate and advanced courses are low. Low literacy and numeracy levels for many learners commencing their courses remain a significant barrier to learning. Too many adult learners make insufficient progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills and too many, who complete entry level, do not progress to the next level. Key skills pass rates are satisfactory. Data are not used sufficiently sharply and precisely to evaluate students' progress.
11. Learners use safe working practices and feel secure and confident within the college's supportive environment. Arrangements to promote learners' economic and social well-being are satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory although low on a few courses. Teachers and other staff provide learners with consistent support that is effective in helping them to develop good standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to work. Work-based learners acquire skills that improve their effectiveness in the workplace.

12. The college supports learners well to make informed choices and to adopt healthy lifestyles. Good internal services and links with external agencies are very successful in providing learners with helpful advice and guidance on sexual, emotional and other medical health issues. Healthy eating is promoted very effectively to learners through tutorial programmes but more could be done to ensure that all are offered healthy food choices. Although the college has excellent sports facilities, learners' participation is not sufficiently monitored or evaluated.
13. Some learners are supported to contribute to the college as, for example, student ambassadors and course representatives. However, learners are not sufficiently empowered to take control of their own decision-making processes in contributing to college life. Some learners are actively involved in community activities but this good practice is not extended to all. Work-based learners have too few opportunities to develop wider skills.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

14. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory, the quality of the learning experience varies significantly across the college and within subject areas. In three of the four subject areas inspected and for employed learners, inspectors judged teaching and learning to be satisfactory. In construction, teaching and learning are good. The college's arrangements for analysing, evaluating and improving teaching and learning are not robust. The actions for improvement from observations are not always helpful in providing teachers with clear guidance on what they should do to improve and, therefore, impact is not easily monitored. Enhanced lecturers and programme managers have not been provided with sufficient training to be able to carry out observations rigorously enough to promote improvement. Arrangements for sharing good practice in teaching and learning are not sufficiently formalised.
15. In the better lessons, teachers plan learning activities and resources that challenge the most able and support those who are struggling. For example, in construction teachers use up-to-date software and learning technology to motivate and challenge learners. In information and communication technology (ICT), teachers' very good management of learners' behaviour is effective in helping them to develop positive attitudes to work, preparing them well for employment. In less effective lessons teachers do not establish clear enough learning objectives for the sessions so as to monitor fully learners' progress. Questioning techniques are not used effectively to challenge all learners and to check their understanding. Learners have too few opportunities to explain or reflect upon their learning. The pace of sessions is slow and activities are too teacher-led. Data are not always used to plan lessons effectively and to inform the variety of activities that will meet the needs of all learners.
16. Most teachers provide learners with assessment feedback which helps them to understand what they need to do to improve. In business, administration and law very good assessment helps learners to make good progress. In the workplace, assessors check learners' knowledge and understanding thoroughly. However, work-based assessment plans are not sufficiently detailed to monitor

learners' progress against their targets. Learning resources are good. Although teachers have good access to up-to-date learning technology, their use of this to enhance lessons is variable. Workplace assessors make insufficient use of technology, such as voice recorders and cameras, to enhance the assessment process.

17. Arrangements for the initial assessment of literacy and numeracy have improved. Additional learning support is now provided early in learners' programmes and is targeted better to help those in greatest need. The use of the outcomes of initial assessment to inform teachers' planning of appropriate learning activities is inconsistent and in some areas is weak. The college does not make effective use of management information to analyse and evaluate the impact of the learning support provided.
18. There is a satisfactory range of provision which meets the needs of learners and the wider community satisfactorily. However, in some curriculum areas progression pathways are not developed. For example, level 3 courses are not currently offered in construction. Recent changes have extended curriculum choices but the college acknowledges that more needs to be done to extend the curriculum to match local needs fully. There are too few apprenticeship programmes.
19. Learners have access to a varied programme of enrichment activities which support both their main learning programme and their general skills development. There is good curriculum-based enrichment provision through group activities as well as trips and visits. The take-up of other college enrichment activities, however, is mixed. The college has excellent sports facilities which are available to all learners. Learners participate in a range of community activities which benefit their personal development and their employability prospects. This is particularly so in sport where many work in local schools as mentors and coaches.
20. The college's partnerships with schools, employers and community groups are good. The college is seen as a very committed partner, reliable and with a strong sense of community responsibility. There is some evidence that these partnership activities are having a positive impact on the community. For example, in one local authority the college has made a significant contribution to the reduction of those not in education, employment or training from 18% to 5% in the last three years. Partnerships with schools are good and result in very effective transition arrangements for 14 to 16 year-olds. Around 40% of learners on 14 to 16 programmes progress to further education programmes.
21. The care, guidance and support for learners are good. The college has a well-developed range of support mechanisms to assist learners. Induction programmes are well organised and effective. Each 16 to 18 year-old full-time learner receives a weekly group tutorial and a termly progress check with their personal tutor; learners place a high value on this support. The setting of targets and the tracking of progress towards the development of learners' skills is not consistent across the college.

22. The student support centre provides an effective 'one-stop shop' for students. It is well resourced, well staffed and well used by learners. Additional learning support needs are assessed before the commencement of courses. Tutorial assistants play a pivotal role in this process, ensuring that the support is provided at an early stage. Overall, learners in receipt of support are more likely to succeed than their peers.
23. The learning centre is well resourced and students value the support they get from this facility. Good processes are in place to support the progression of learners. The college's progression adviser visits tutorial sessions to promote and support an effective HE application process. There are good opportunities for learners to progress to the college's foundation degrees; 50% of last year's advanced-level business students progressed to a college degree programme. Progression routes to HE are supported by good partnership relationships with Sheffield Hallam and Leeds Metropolitan Universities. Not all support services extend to learners on employer-based provision.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. Leaders effectively promote their strategic vision for the college, as an inclusive college serving the needs of the local communities. College development plans reflect this vision. The college is a valued partner in many local partnerships to promote economic and social well-being, including strategic partnerships with the local boroughs. The Principal and managers are determined in their efforts to raise standards and support learners to achieve their full potential. However, the college has not made sufficient progress since the previous inspection.
25. Governance of the college is good. Governors have full and effective involvement in establishing the college's strategic direction. They are fully aware of the challenges the college faces. They have secured the financial stability of the college over a significant period. The work of the quality and standards committee is increasingly rigorous. Governors have a wide range of relevant experience, expertise and community links and act as a valuable resource for the college. They provide critical support for managers. Governors have tried hard to recruit members from minority ethnic communities, but so far without success.
26. Management arrangements are satisfactory but they do not always ensure the effective application of all key aspects of operational management, especially for quality assurance. The Principal took up post in late 2010 and introduced new, simplified management arrangements which provide a sound basis for improvement. Staff support the culture of improvement and innovation, which is promoted through an open and consultative style of management. Communications are generally good. Staff have good opportunities to make their views known.
27. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory overall, but systems have been insufficiently effective in identifying or securing improvements needed. The recent introduction of new management systems has brought a renewed emphasis on programme area planning, target setting and action planning for

improvement. While these systems are beginning to have an impact there remain too many inconsistencies between subject areas. Management information systems are reliable but data are not always used robustly to inform improvement planning. The quality assurance of work-based learning is underdeveloped.

28. Self-assessment is satisfactory overall but inspectors identified too little evaluation and the insufficient use of evidence to frame areas for improvement. Course reviews, until recently, have not been sufficiently focused to provide secure action points for improvement. The college's scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is insufficiently helpful in identifying how teaching and learning can be improved.
29. The college appropriately captures and acts on learners' views. Learners have a wide range of opportunities to express their views, although the extent of their participation and attendance at representative meetings is too variable. There are examples of changes to the pattern and content of courses as a result of their comments. The engagement of employers to support and promote improvement is growing although the number currently consulted is relatively small.
30. The safeguarding of learners is good. The college meets government requirements in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Sound policies and procedures are in place, with comprehensive awareness-raising programmes for staff and learners and appropriate staff and governor training. There is a designated senior manager and governor, both appropriately trained. Criminal Records Bureau checks are comprehensive, up-to-date and centrally recorded. Tutorials for learners include awareness raising and there are good and effective links with external agencies to promote learners' welfare. Health and safety procedures are rigorously applied and well understood by staff and their learners.
31. The promotion of equality and diversity is good overall, but it is satisfactory for work-based learners. Senior and other managers provide good leadership that is effective in ensuring that the college meets its aim to be an inclusive organisation. The college works with a range of partners to support those young people who might otherwise not participate in education and training. Learners feel valued and respected. A comprehensive and up-to-date range of policies and procedures is in place, including the single equalities scheme. The equality and diversity strategy committee, including governors as members, manages and reviews implementation of policies and procedures effectively. Good analysis of equalities-related data and subsequent actions have removed any significant differences in learners' performance across different groups. Equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted in lessons, in spite of substantial training to help teachers to do this.
32. Management of resources is good. The standard of accommodation and facilities across the college is also good. Significant investment has been made in resources, particularly in ICT. Teachers and other staff are well qualified and experienced. Financial management is good and the college has maintained a

strong financial position for some years. The college pays good attention to sustainability. Given the overall success rates for learners, value for money is satisfactory.

Subject areas

Construction

Grade 2

Context

33. The college offers construction craft courses, including diplomas and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at foundation and intermediate levels. In addition, specialist occupational courses in plastering and wall and floor tiling are provided, as are BTEC first diploma and foundation building-craft occupations for school pupils. Of the 340 learners, 220 are full time, 61 are adults and 25 are aged 14 to 16. A further 26 learners are on apprenticeships and 22 are on Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. With one exception, long-course success rates at foundation level are high and above the national averages. The college recognises the need to improve success rates on the foundation diploma course in painting and decorating. At intermediate level, success rates are at least in line with the national average.
- Over the last three years, success rates for school pupils aged 14 to 16 have been high. Apprenticeship success rates, both overall and for those completing within the agreed timescale, improved significantly in 2009/10 and are high. Success rates on Train to Gain courses are satisfactory.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners develop good occupational skills, improve in confidence and motivation and increase their employability prospects. For example, learners in wall and floor tiling, tiled a floor in a herringbone pattern and around a window and produced symmetrical and aesthetically pleasing work.
- There is a good emphasis on health and safety in most lessons. Learners use safe working practices and say they feel safe in the college environment. Health and safety are strongly emphasised during induction programmes and in workshops. Learners carry out risk assessments prior to undertaking practical tasks.
- Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are carefully planned and stimulating. In these lessons, teachers have clear and realistic learning outcomes, share them with learners and revisit them at suitable intervals to check the progress made. In an outstanding theory lesson in carpentry and joinery, the teacher used scaled models of timber roof trusses, supported by good use of technology, to illustrate construction methods. However, in weaker lessons, teachers do not sufficiently check on learners' understanding or involve them enough.
- In theory lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching and learning methods to meet learners' needs. They set challenging but achievable in-class tasks. Teachers and learners use construction-related specialist computer software,

the college's virtual learning environment, the internet and mobile learning to stimulate and enhance learning.

- Assessment of learners' work and internal verification are good. Assessment is fair and consistent. Internal verification is timely and effectively planned. Assessors visiting apprentices on site make good use of technology to speed and enhance the assessment process.
- The range of provision is satisfactory. There is no progression beyond intermediate level. Learners stated that they would welcome the opportunity to progress beyond intermediate level within the college.
- The range of enrichment activities is good. Learners participate in the 'Skillbuild' competitions. Group tutorials on sustainability are conducted to give learners awareness of ecological issues and technical experts are invited to the college as guest speakers. However, there are currently few industrial visits.
- The support for learners is good. Within classroom and workshop situations, learners receive good individual support from their teachers to help them achieve their potential. One-to-one tutorial support is good.
- Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report is sufficiently evaluative. Detailed analysis of success rates by gender, disability, ethnicity and age groups are presented. Self-assessment does not identify any areas for improvement in teaching and learning, in spite of issues arising from internal teaching observations.
- Resources are good. Teachers are vocationally qualified. They have assessor and verifier awards. Most classrooms are conducive to good learning and are well equipped with interactive whiteboards. Workshops are generally adequate although some are very good.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Lesson plans and schemes of work do not incorporate equality and diversity issues. There has been a gradual reduction in the number of female learners in construction over the last three years from 16 to five. Work-based learners' awareness of equality and diversity is checked through the on-site review process but the checking tends to be cursory and the quality of the discussions that take place depends too heavily on the individual assessor.

What does Dearne Valley College need to do to improve further?

- Implement the action plans for improving success rates on the foundation diploma course in painting and decorating.
- Ensure that teachers engage all learners in the lessons through the use of targeted and probing questions.
- Identify areas for development arising from the internal teaching and learning observations, instigate an action plan to address them and incorporate the issues and the action plan in the self-assessment report.
- Integrate equality and diversity in lesson plans and schemes of work, and address more rigorously the issues relating to the low female participation in construction courses.

Information and communication technology

Grade 3

Context

34. Full-time and part-time courses are available from foundation to advanced level. Of 257 students, 113 are aged 16 to 18. The 90 full-time learners attend classes on the main campus. Part-time learners attend the main site or one of the three community venues. Approximately 100 learners are female, 79% of whom are part-time.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on long courses are satisfactory. In 2009/10, although learners' achievements on the Foundation Project and national award were good, success rates on the first diploma and BTEC national certificate were low. Standards of work seen in class and in the marked work scrutinised were good and consistent with improved success rates on long courses. Success rates on key skills courses are low, while those for adult part-time learners on short courses are high.
- Learners develop good personal, social and learning skills. Many students arrive with a history of poor or disruptive behaviour and low achievement. Attitudes to learning improve greatly. Current retention rates are significantly higher than at the same time in the previous year. Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Learners feel very safe and can make informed choices about health and well-being. They know how to keep themselves safe, and display good working practices at computers. They are very aware of e-safety. Learners value the supportive tutorial programme.
- Learners make a good contribution to the community. Full-time learners have a good awareness of rights and responsibilities with regard to equality and diversity. One group of learners completed a website, used by external agencies, alerting people to the dangers of cyber-bullying and how to respond to it.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions, teachers encourage a wide range of activities and learners make good progress. Peer review is used well. Teachers manage learners' behaviour effectively and focus on developing cooperative skills. Teachers' feedback on assignments is good and learners respond positively to it. Effective use is made of ICT.
- In the satisfactory lessons, not all learners are fully involved in the group work. Questioning techniques are not used effectively to challenge all learners and to check their understanding. Learning objectives are unclear and the pace of lessons is slow.
- The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. Progression routes are clear. However, there is no work-based learning and the use of work-placements is underdeveloped. Partnerships contribute satisfactorily to enriching the quality of provision, with external speakers contributing to a good tutorial programme.

- Support is good. Initial assessment has improved. Learners with additional learning needs are identified quickly. Very good use is made of in-class support on full-time and part-time courses. Learners who receive additional support achieve better than their peers. A specialist tutorial assistant provides further support for learners at risk of underachieving. There is good pastoral support that learners value. Induction for part-time learners is poor.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have successfully implemented initiatives to improve retention. Targets are set and monitored to improve provision. Data are used effectively to analyse learners' performance, review course performance and monitor full-time learners' progress.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Participation and outcomes for learners are monitored. Initiatives have been implemented to redress the gender imbalance on courses. Female ambassador students attend school events. Promotional materials avoid gender and other stereotyping. The tutorial programme promotes equality and diversity. Resources and accommodation are good.
- The programme of observations of teaching and learning is inadequate. Insufficient observations were carried out in 2009/10 and there has been only one observation in the current year. Areas for improvement are not routinely followed up. The grades awarded in the area's self-assessment were significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors.

What does Dearne Valley College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates, particularly on the first diploma and BTEC national certificate courses, by more effective questioning techniques and more varied activities so that all learners are engaged and challenged.
- Liaise more with local employers to improve the curriculum offer so that it better meets the needs of the college's communities. Extend the use of work placements so as to enrich the learner experience.
- Improve the observation of teaching and learning programme to ensure that observers focus more on assessing the pace of learning and learners' attainment. Identify good practice in observations so these can be shared to aid improvement.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 3

Context

35. The college offers part-time literacy and numeracy courses for adult learners on the main college site and in a number of community venues. There are 137 learners following literacy courses and 129 on numeracy courses. All classes are mixed-level with learners working towards qualifications at entry, foundation and intermediate levels. The college also provides functional skills courses in English and mathematics at foundation and intermediate levels for 860 learners on full-time vocational programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on literacy and numeracy courses are slightly below the national average and have declined since 2008/09. Retention is lower than the national average across the provision. The in-year retention rate in 2010/11 has improved in a number of areas but remains low on entry-level literacy courses. Many learners who complete entry-level literacy and numeracy courses do not progress to the next level. Success rates on functional skills courses are satisfactory.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, tutors use a range of stimulating and challenging activities and supporting resources that engage and interest learners. However, in many sessions, the range of learning activities is narrow, with an over-dependence on worksheets.
- Targets for individual learners are insufficiently specific. All learners have individual learning plans but they lack sufficient detail and are ineffective in accurately identifying personal targets for learners.
- The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Learners on full-time vocational courses follow functional English and mathematics courses at the appropriate level. However, the range of provision for adults is not always sufficient to meet their literacy, language and numeracy needs fully. The college offers no English for speakers of other languages provision despite an identified demand.
- Partnership arrangements are satisfactory. The college works with a number of schools in order to meet the literacy and numeracy needs of parents so that they can more effectively support their children. It also works with a local secure hospital to develop provision for patients.
- Additional support for learners is satisfactory. Learning support staff work alongside tutors on most literacy and numeracy courses and on many functional skills courses. In many lessons, the learning support worker has a clear role supporting individual learners and is effectively managed by the tutor. In other lessons, however, the specific role of the learning support worker is not clear and the support provided, therefore, is not effective.

- Information, advice and guidance on adult literacy and numeracy courses are insufficient to enable learners to make informed choices about future learning. Guidance about progression routes is not integrated into the courses. Learners say they often do not get adequate responses to queries they make about opportunities in the college and beyond.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The department places a strong emphasis on meeting learners' individual learning needs and ensuring an inclusive approach to teaching and learning. Relevant training is provided for teaching staff. However, there is insufficient promotion of diversity in the curriculum with little use of activities and resources that reflect and promote a diverse society.
- A wide range of resources is available to support learning. Many classrooms have a suite of modern computers which are used effectively. Most classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards that are used by all tutors. A broad range of online resources is used by tutors as well as printed learning resources. These include vocationally specific learning materials for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- Strategies to improve quality are not effective. Actions from self-assessment do not identify some of the key areas for improvement particularly in relation to teaching and learning. Data to evaluate performance are not used effectively and targets for improvement are not set or monitored at course level. The evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning through the college's observation system is insufficiently detailed and does not identify actions for improvement.

What does Dearne Valley College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates by monitoring learners' progress consistently and by the more effective use of management information, learners' feedback and the outcomes of teaching and learning observations.
- Improve the pace of learning and the level of challenge in lessons by using varied learning activities and resources, including greater use of pair and group work.
- Refine personal targets in individual learning plans to include more detailed, specific, measurable and achievable short-term and long-term goals.
- Improve the quality and consistency of curriculum management by ensuring better monitoring and evaluation of provision so that areas for improvement are identified and prompt action is taken to resolve them.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

36. The college provides courses in business and administration at its main site and at a range of employers' premises. The subject area has 37 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 on advanced-level national certificate and diploma courses. In addition, approximately 39 learners are taking NVQs in customer service, team leading, and administration. Five learners are enrolled on an apprenticeship programme. A group of 12 learners aged 14 to 16 participate in the 'Young Apprenticeships in Rotherham Scheme' in business studies and take an intermediate first certificate in business.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on advanced courses have been above the national average for three years. Pass rates have been consistently at 100%. In addition, over 67% of advanced diploma learners achieved high grades in 2009/10. Success rates on apprenticeships are satisfactory and those on Train to Gain programmes are high. The success rate on the first certificate in business, completed by 14 to 16 year-olds in 2008/09, was high. Retention rates have risen considerably in the last three years and are now satisfactory. Progression from business courses to HE or employment is good.
- Standards of work are good. In most lessons, learners show an appropriate understanding of business concepts and practices. Attendance rates have improved and are currently satisfactory. Learners value the opportunity to learn and develop in a very safe environment. Risk assessments are carried out for relevant activities, including work placements and visits. Learners take part in community events as part of their course and as part of the wider enrichment programme.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, learners are engaged in a range of practical activities. Teachers use good questioning techniques to develop learners' understanding. Group work is managed very effectively by teachers and enjoyed by learners. In some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes.
- In too many lessons, expectations from teachers are too low and learners are allowed to proceed without showing an appropriate level of understanding. Teachers make too little creative use of the interactive whiteboards, and information and learning technologies are insufficiently used to improve and support teaching, learning and assessment.
- The quality of assessment is very good. Arrangements to quality assure assessments are well established and effective. Marked work contains good feedback that allows students to improve their work. Regular reviews allow teachers to monitor progress and set targets to raise achievement. Learners appreciate and respond to feedback on their progress from tutors.
- Resources to support teaching and learning are good. All rooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards and there is easy computer access.

Displays of relevant business-related materials support and illustrate the topics and subjects being studied.

- The range of provision is too narrow. There is no foundation or intermediate provision for 16 to 18 year-old learners. Despite its location on an extensive business park, the college provides very little work-based learning or training. The number of learners on apprenticeships and NVQs remains modest. The college provides a foundation degree in business.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive effective support from the small team of tutors and through a structured tutorial programme. Preparation for progression to HE and for those seeking employment is good. However, not all learners are made aware of the availability of higher-level apprenticeships. Support for learners with additional learning needs is good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent reorganisation has brought together business with travel and tourism. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of provision, with students engaged in joint and complementary activities. The new manager of this area has begun a strategic review of the provision. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes.
- Arrangements to assure the quality of provision are good. Module, unit and end-of-course evaluations involve learners and provide good evidence for self-assessment. However, in 2009/10 only two lesson observations were completed. While the self-assessment report is broadly accurate, it is insufficiently evaluative. The more recently developed improvement plan, however, does contain detailed actions for improvement. Actions to improve links with schools and employers are beginning to have a positive impact.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Although an assessment of learning styles, additional learning support and personal characteristics is completed at the start of the year, there is little evidence to show how this is used to develop learning and assessment activities to meet the range of learners' needs.

What does Dearne Valley College need to do to improve further?

- Increase the range of provision for 16 to 18 year-old learners at foundation and intermediate levels to match local needs more successfully. Work effectively with employers to develop the provision to meet skills needs and labour demands.
- Improve the extent to which lessons meet the needs of individual learners by differentiating teaching, learning and support strategies and increasing the level of challenge.
- Further develop the creative use of information and learning technologies to improve and support teaching, learning and assessment.

Information about the inspection

37. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's director of learning and performance, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency, Framework for Excellence indicators, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
38. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the college. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Dearne Valley 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. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	2,808	2,160	160	488
Part-time learners	1,758	342	1,416	0
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3			
A. Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3			
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3			
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2			
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2			
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3			
B. Quality of provision	3	3	3	3
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3			
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
C. Leadership and management	3	3	3	3
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2			
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2			
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2			
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3			
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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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

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