

Plumpton College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130667

Name of lead inspector: David Martin HMI

Last day of inspection: 25 November 2011

Type of provider: Specialist college

Address: Ditchling Road
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Lewes
East Sussex
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Information about the provider

1. Plumpton College is a small further education college in East Sussex, largely specialising in education and training for rural industries. The main college campus is on a large rural estate a few miles from the county town of Lewes. The estate, which has increased in size in recent years, is used extensively for practical training. The college has three additional centres in East Sussex; at Netherfield, Stanmer Park in Brighton and at Flimwell in the north east of the county.
2. The college provides full- and part-time courses from entry level to advanced level, together with foundation degree and degree programmes, in partnership with the University of Brighton. Courses are offered in agriculture and countryside, horticulture and floristry, animal care and veterinary nursing, rural machinery and engineering, forestry and arboriculture, equine studies, outdoor education and wine and viticulture. Work-based learning is provided for some 350 learners and a substantial programme for school pupils aged 14 to 16 involves 51 schools.
3. Students are recruited from a wide area across East and West Sussex and the wider south east. The number of full-time students has increased by 37% since the previous inspection. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups in 2010/11 was 1% and 41% of all students are female.
4. Since the previous inspection the college has undertaken a major building programme, providing a new animal care unit, library and resources centre, classrooms, residential accommodation, machinery workshops and farm-based teaching resources.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - University of Brighton (higher education franchised courses)
 - Royal Agricultural College (higher education franchised part-time course)
 - Harper Adams University College (higher education franchised part-time course).
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (countryside and forestry training)
 - Hill McManus training (skills for life training)
 - Steve Willis training (plumbing and heating engineering).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	505 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	1,028 full-time learners 80 part-time learners
Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	62 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	293 full-time learners 566 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	208 learners 146 apprentices

Summary report

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

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

Subject Areas	
Agriculture, countryside management and gamekeeping	1
Horticulture and floristry	2

Overall effectiveness

7. Plumpton is a good college, with good capacity to make further improvements. Provision in agriculture, countryside management and gamekeeping is outstanding. Good leadership and management have driven the college forward significantly in recent years. Its work is central to the development of the rural economy. The college has markedly increased its student numbers and provides an increasingly wide range of courses to an increasingly diverse student community. At the same time, the college has substantially improved its facilities and resources. Quality improvement, including the college's self-assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses, is good, although not all college-wide aspects of the provision are appropriately covered by self-assessment.
8. Students achieve good outcomes and enjoy their learning. They feel highly valued as part of the college. Their overall outcomes on further education courses, both for young and adult learners, are good, and continue to improve. In some vocational areas, a minority of courses have low success rates. Outcomes for pupils aged 14 to 16 are outstanding. For apprentices they are satisfactory overall, but low for advanced apprentices. Students' skills and standards of work are good and sometimes outstanding, especially in practical work. Students' progression to further study or to employment is excellent. Students, including those who live at college, feel very safe and the college's arrangements for safeguarding students are good. The promotion of equality and diversity is good, but insufficiently promoted in lessons and in reviews for apprentices.
9. Teaching and learning are good, and improving. Teachers successfully develop students' understanding and skills by enabling them to link theory to their practical work on the college estate. In a minority of lessons, especially for literacy and numeracy, learning activities are less well planned and students' progress is slow. The needs and interests of college users, including employers, are very well met. The college's extensive partnerships with other organisations are outstanding in helping to improve the quality and relevance of students' courses. The care, guidance and support of students are good, although arrangements to help all students improve their literacy and numeracy skills are underdeveloped.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are good, as is students' attainment of their qualifications. Overall success rates for learner responsive provision have improved over the last three years and are high. Whilst this is characteristic of many subject areas, success rates for a minority of courses have been below national averages over the last two years.
- Outcomes for students aged 14 to 16 are outstanding. Learners' outcomes for apprenticeship provision are satisfactory overall. Completion of courses within agreed timescales is now well above the national rate, but for advanced

apprentices both overall and timely framework success rates are well below average.

- Students make excellent progress in improving their economic and social well-being. A strong emphasis on enterprise permeates their life in college. Their standards of work, and the skills they develop, are good, and sometimes better, especially in practical tasks.
- Students feel very safe in the college. The safeguarding of students and the promotion of safe working practices are good. Arrangements for the care and supervision of residential students are also good. In work-based learning, although safety is a high priority, the promotion of broader aspects of safeguarding is often only given cursory attention.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned, students show pride in their work and their teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve. Particularly positive is the way teachers successfully relate theory to land-based industry practice. In a minority of lessons, especially for literacy and numeracy, learning activities and materials are not well designed and students' progress is slow.
- The extensive, well-organised and inclusive curriculum enables a diverse range of students, including those aged 14 to 16, to study a range of specialist, vocational courses. Students' progression between different levels of study and into higher education and employment are excellent.
- Partnerships with local schools and the parents and carers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. Outcomes for these groups of students are excellent. The college's positive links with employers are used well to enhance the curriculum and provide extensive work experience for students.
- Students requiring support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills receive additional help, but their learning plans are not always sufficiently detailed to ensure timely improvement. Effective practice in the integration and delivery of functional skills is not shared across all curriculum areas.
- Leaders and managers promote a culture of high standards and expectations for staff and students. They set challenging targets and support area managers well in achieving them. The management of change, including an ambitious building programme and significant increases in student numbers, is well managed. Curriculum management is variable, being good in some areas and weaker in others.
- Governance is outstanding. Governors play a fundamental role in shaping the strategic direction and ethos of the college. They are very well informed and knowledgeable and fulfil their roles as critical friends very well.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college provides a safe, harmonious and respectful environment for students and staff and has a culture of inclusivity. Teachers do not always take up opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons, and equality and diversity are not well covered in work-based learning students' progress reviews.

- Self-assessment is mostly accurate and reliable at subject area level. Action plans are precise and concise and are rigorously monitored. Managers use and understand the college's performance data well. Analysis of current data has helped to bring about improvements in the outcomes for students. The self-assessment of the generic aspects of the provision is incomplete and does not always identify weaker provision.

What does Plumpton College need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' success rates in poorer performing subject areas and for advanced apprenticeships, by building on the good practice demonstrated in other areas of the curriculum.
- Improve the sharing of effective practice in supporting students with complex additional learning needs so that all students improve their literacy and numeracy skills and achieve accreditation where appropriate.
- Ensure that all aspects of the provision are fully covered by self-assessment so that weaker provision can be identified and appropriately targeted for improvement.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good reputation of the college
- the personal and study support from teachers
- the feeling of safety in the college
- the good range of additional activities
- the opportunities to meet employers and to take part in work opportunities
- the good working relationships with other students and staff
- the good specialist and teaching resources.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the range of social activities organised for students over the age of 18.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the alertness and entrepreneurial approach of the college
- the showcasing of learners' skills and activities which promote the industry
- the responsive management team and the positive way in which employers are listened to
- the college's growing positive reputation within the industry.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no areas for improvement were identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. Good leadership and management provide a secure basis for further development and quality improvement. Progress in rectifying areas for improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Within the context of significantly increased student numbers and a wider range of courses, outcomes for learners and teaching and learning are improved and are good.
11. Targets to improve provision further are suitably demanding. Leaders, managers and staff know what needs to be done. The sharing of experiences and good practice is developing well and the few underperforming areas are being challenged and supported. The college's self-assessment is accurate and a reliable reflection of the key strengths and areas for improvement in the subject areas, although college-wide self-assessments are less useful. Issues in work-based learning and literacy and numeracy were not identified during the current self-assessment process, but are areas that need to be addressed.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Students' attainment of their qualifications in learner responsive provision is good. The college's overall success rate has improved over the last three years, especially in 2010/11, and is now high, at 86%. Success rates are high both for students aged 16 to 18 and for those aged 19 and over, at 87% and 86% respectively. High overall pass and retention rates contribute to this performance.
13. Outcomes are good on both long and short courses, but are particularly high for the very large number of students on short courses. Long course success rates have improved over the last three years at entry, foundation and advanced levels, but at intermediate level they have stayed much the same. Entry and foundation level success rates are particularly high, and well above the national average in 2010/11. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 are very high, having improved from 82% in 2008/09 to 88% in 2010/11.
14. High, and improving, overall success rates are a characteristic of many subject areas. However, as the college has correctly identified, success rates for a minority of courses have been below national averages over the last two years in areas such as forestry, equine, machinery, metalsmithing and animal care.
15. Outcomes for apprenticeship provision are satisfactory. Overall framework success rates have improved over the last three years and are now at the national rate for 2009/10. Completion of courses within agreed timescales has improved and is now well above the national rate. Performance at intermediate level is significantly better than for the relatively small number of advanced level apprentices, where both overall and timely framework success are well below national rates.

16. The college analyses data well to identify any differences in the performance of students. Analysis of success rates by the various equality categories shows no significant differences in the performance of students.
17. Students make excellent progress in improving their economic and social well-being. A strong emphasis on enterprise permeates their life in college. Their standards of work, and the skills they develop, are good and sometimes better, especially in practical tasks. Students very much enjoy their studies and are rightly proud of their achievements. They are well motivated and well behaved. Attendance is maintained at high levels and is good. Students are punctual to their lessons.
18. Students' progression to further study and work is very good. Based on the college's thorough work on student destinations, 67% of further education students completing courses in 2011 progressed to further study and 27% to paid employment. The progression of students aged 14 to 16 is good, with some 50% moving on to further courses at Plumpton and 33% to other further education in 2010/11.
19. Students, including those in residential accommodation, feel very safe within the college. They have good opportunities through the college's curriculum and supporting activities to help them make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Learners make a good contribution to both the college and local communities. Students organise and participate in many charitable events and often help organise college open events and visits by prospective students.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

20. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well to provide a good range of activities that promote learning and maintain students' interest. They use the college estate and the surrounding countryside well to provide stimulating and vocationally relevant contexts for lessons and practical activities. Students show pride in their work and their teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve.
21. A key strength of teaching and learning is the way teachers successfully relate theory to land-based industry practice. For example, students on an advanced agriculture course related theory learned in lessons, on the management of dairy herds, to practical work on the management of pregnant sows. In horticulture lessons, plant specimens examined and studied in lessons are then regularly identified in their natural state growing in the college grounds. Foundation students and secondary school pupils benefit from well-organised and engaging activities, helping them to develop as citizens and also deepening their understanding of the importance of agriculture and countryside industries to their lives.

22. In a minority of lessons, especially those aimed at developing students' literacy and numeracy levels, learning activities and materials are not well designed and students' progress is slow. In a small number of lessons across the curriculum, teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge and differentiated activities to meet the full range of students' abilities.
23. Curriculum teams work hard to produce a wide selection of relevant and interesting learning materials for students. Many are on the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) and are related directly to assessments. Students make extensive use of them outside lessons. Not all departments have made good progress in providing online materials and managers acknowledge that there is work still to be done.
24. Assessment is good and students' work is marked regularly. Students receive prompt feedback and helpful comments on how to improve. Assignments are vocationally relevant and appropriate to the level and stage of the students' courses. Course teams track and monitor students' progress well and students are confident about the progress they are making. Internal verification is thorough, complies with awarding body requirements and ensures that the assessment of work is accurate. Pastoral and tutorial meetings often result in students and teachers developing relevant and quantitative targets for individuals. However, individual learning plans are insufficiently well used and contain too many targets that are not quantitative, cannot be monitored and do not help students improve.
25. The comprehensive lesson observation system, viewed by teachers as supportive, has raised standards in teaching and learning. Outcomes from observations lead to appropriate support and development opportunities. Not all subject areas sufficiently share good practice in teaching and learning and thus the pace of improvement is variable.
26. The college has a very varied and inclusive programme offer that reflects, and is supportive of, the rural community it serves. A strong emphasis on raising aspirations is reflected in the excellent progression rates of students. An exceptional range of occupational enrichment, placement, and additional vocational qualifications are offered, enhancing students' career prospects.
27. Partnerships with schools and local authorities are outstanding and enable students who might otherwise underachieve, to gain specialist qualifications and progress into further education. Extensive links with employers are highly beneficial in widening students' experience of work in specialist areas and in creating employment opportunities. The successful use of enterprise activities enables students to develop their economic well-being. The recent introduction of the 'Land Based Entrepreneurs' project is already demonstrating a positive impact on the engagement of students in business planning.
28. The provision of information, advice, guidance and pastoral support for students is good. Students' move from school to college is carefully planned,

enabling students to settle into college life quickly. Students' safeguarding and welfare needs are well met by the experienced support services staff and teachers. Residential students are well looked after. Partnerships with a range of appropriate external agencies, including counselling services, enhance the effective support provided to students with particularly complex needs. The college bursary scheme is well organised and enables eligible students to overcome economic constraints and remain on their courses.

29. Support for vulnerable students progressing to college from care or supported learning is outstanding. The college goes to exceptional lengths to ensure that these students and their parents and carers are actively involved in designing bespoke programmes to match their individual needs.
30. Students particularly value individual tutorials during which they can discuss their personal progress. Those who find their work difficult or who are at risk of not completing their course are monitored carefully by staff and in the majority of cases are retained on their course. The outcomes of diagnostic assessment to identify the literacy and numeracy skills that students need to improve are used well to ensure that students are enrolled on the correct course.
31. The effective integration of functional literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills into agriculture, machinery, horticulture and business courses has a positive impact on the achievement of students. College managers, however, do not capitalise on these successes by sharing this good practice across the rest of the college. Opportunities are too limited for students who have not achieved grade C or above in GCSE English and/or mathematics to gain this accreditation at college.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

32. Managers and governors successfully promote ambition and raise standards. Targets to improve performance are challenging and managers at all levels make good use of students' performance data to monitor, and intervene to drive forward, improvement. The Principal, senior managers and governors set a clear identity and direction for an inclusive college, offering a broad range of vocational programmes, fitting well with the local and national rural economy. Communication and team work are good. Curriculum management has improved over recent years. It is now very good in some areas, but less effective in others. The operational and strategic management of work-based learning and literacy and numeracy are under developed.
33. The recent expansion in student numbers and accommodation has been very well managed. A significant building programme, completed on time and to budget, with minimal disruption to learning, has improved teaching accommodation. Industry-standard facilities are reflected particularly in the machinery and equine areas. Student numbers have increased by around 40% in recent years.

34. Governance is outstanding. Governors are knowledgeable and very well informed. They perform exceptionally well in supporting and challenging senior managers and in helping shape the educational character of the college. They bring relevant and high levels of skill to the college. Many link with curriculum and management teams and provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge.
35. The safeguarding of students is good. Safeguarding and the development of safe working practices are strongly emphasised throughout the college. A comprehensive central record contains appropriate details relating to staff, managers and governors. It is used well to ensure that training is up to date. Records are maintained for the building contractors, many of whom are on site for long periods. The security and safety of the college site, including residential accommodation, are well managed. Safeguarding and anti-bullying, including e-bullying, policies are clear and well considered. Students know how to obtain help and the college has created a culture where students and staff are strongly safety aware. Student safety and risk assessments are good.
36. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college has a culture of inclusivity and provides a harmonious and respectful environment for students and staff. It celebrates extensively the achievements and diversity of its students. Male and female students are equally represented, although this disguises the traditional sector-wide under representation on some courses. The college addresses this by actively promoting such courses within local schools, through its extensive 14 to 16 programme, career events, open days and shows. A recently successful partnership bid is funding efforts to attract students from a south London borough, with two residential students currently following equine studies. All staff have equality and diversity updating. However, teachers do not always pursue opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons, and the coverage and promotion of equality and diversity during work-based learning reviews are poor.
37. The college attaches high importance to the views of its users when planning improvements and adapting the curriculum. The views of students, parents and employers are regularly gathered and acted upon. The results of these actions are displayed around the college. Additionally, the Principal meets with every student at least twice during the year.
38. The college's self-assessment is concise and is a reliable reflection of key areas for improvement in subject areas. Self-assessment of the broader aspects of the college's work is less complete and the issues in work-based learning and literacy and numeracy are not identified. Course information, including student performance data, is well used to identify areas for intervention and action. Actions to ensure improvements are appropriately precise, with staff teams understanding these priorities. The monitoring of progress against action plans is frequent and rigorous. Overall, this shows variation in the extent of improvement across subject teams, both for teaching and for success rates. Self-assessment is inclusive of staff views, as well as those of the users.

39. The standard of accommodation and resources is high. The college's property strategy has significantly improved the quality and efficient use of the estate, farm and outdoor resources. New buildings feature many sustainable features including ground source heating, packed earth walls and 'sedum roofs'. Older buildings are being adapted to reduce energy consumption. Staff are appropriately qualified and have high levels of vocational skill and experience. Most take an active part in a good range of training and professional development activities. Financial management is very good. Outcomes for learners are good, as is the quality of teaching and learning. The college achieves good value for money.

Subject areas

Agriculture, countryside management and gamekeeping

Grade 1

Context

40. Currently, 214 students are on full-time courses in agriculture, gamekeeping and countryside management, at the main campus and two smaller centres. Nearly three quarters of them are aged 16 to 18. Provision is available from foundation to advanced levels, with further progression opportunities to higher level courses within the college. Currently, 117 students study agriculture, 32 study gamekeeping and a further 65 study countryside management. An additional 11 students are enrolled on agricultural apprenticeships, delivered predominantly in the workplace.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. Success rates on most courses are very high, often at 100%. They are good for apprentices. For a small number of intermediate level agriculture students they are lower, but still good, and they are satisfactory for the small number of foundation students. Students enjoy their learning, particularly in practical settings, and produce an excellent standard of written and practical work.
- Students develop excellent, commercially-relevant, skills and knowledge which prepare them for employment and higher education. Students participate in a comprehensive range of additional qualifications and activities linked to the commercial operation of the college estate. They develop a good range of personal and social skills. Practical activities are particularly well organised with a clear focus on safe working practices.
- Teaching and learning are good and supported by comprehensive assessment feedback which promotes high levels of student achievement. High expectations for students' behaviour, linked to commercial standards, effectively prepare students for employment and higher education. In theory lessons, teachers' checking and consolidation of learning are less effective and teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge for more able learners.
- An excellent range of resources are well utilised to deliver a high-quality learning programme. Significant recent investment has provided many valuable facilities, including a high-quality dairy. Students benefit from access to an excellent commercial farm, very well integrated into the curriculum.
- Staff are well qualified, with excellent industrial knowledge that enriches the quality of teaching and learning. Curriculum knowledge is enhanced by regular industrial contact through a range of industry organisations. Links to local farms and shoots are effectively used to enrich the curriculum and provide extensive employment opportunities for students.

- Students benefit from an excellent range of vocational learning opportunities, including extensive use of visits to local farms, growers and other local industries. Farm routines are well integrated into learning programmes, through comprehensive liaison between teachers and commercial staff.
- Students' progression is very good. Curriculum design is highly effective, providing clearly defined progression pathways that prepare both full- and part-time students for entry to further study or employment. Additional learning support is used effectively to enable students to achieve their vocational qualifications. However, opportunities for students to gain formal literacy and numeracy qualifications that would support further career aspirations are insufficient.
- Outstanding college partnerships provide a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of both students and stakeholders. The curriculum is enriched through a comprehensive programme of visits and practical activities. Excellent collaborative arrangements with employers and industry organisations enable students to benefit from a good range of work experience opportunities and to access additional learning opportunities at reasonable cost.
- Excellent individual support enables students to achieve their learning goals. Retention rates are excellent. Outstanding promotion of career and employment opportunities prepares students well for leaving the college. A new tutorial system is effectively used to track student progress and to help motivate students to achieve well.
- Management of the curriculum is excellent and focused on ensuring the quality of students' experience. Curriculum development is responsive to students' needs and based upon extensive liaison with students, employers and local industry organisations. Progress is good in raising the quality of teaching and learning, although the development of outstanding teaching is too slow.
- Quality assurance and self-assessment set appropriate targets and provide a good basis for further development. Data are effectively used to monitor progress and make appropriate changes to curriculum delivery. Overall, there is a need for greater focus on the development of outstanding teaching and learning.
- The provision provides outstanding value for money and ensures that students are well prepared for future careers. Classrooms are well equipped, practical resources are well used to provide students with an extensive range of practical opportunities and good use of information technology (IT) allows records of commercial activity to be effectively integrated into teaching and learning.

What does Plumpton College need to do to improve further?

- Facilitate quality improvement by ensuring that support for teachers is more explicitly focused on the development of outstanding teaching and learning.

- Provide a greater range of formal literacy and numeracy qualifications for students at all levels within the curriculum area, to further improve their opportunities for progression and employment.

Horticulture and floristry

Grade 2

Context

41. Currently, 322 students study horticulture and floristry, from foundation to advanced levels. Of these, 27% are aged 16 to 18 and 56% are female. Around 50% of all students study horticulture, based at the college, of which just over half study part time. A quarter of all students study floristry, two thirds of whom study full time. Some 26 apprentices and advanced apprentices are on horticulture programmes and 43 school pupils aged 14 to 16 follow a foundation level work based horticulture course. A small number of students are based at other college centres.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates on all significant courses are high and above national rates. Retention on horticulture courses has improved and is now good, and learners make good progress. Course teams have successfully implemented strategies to improve the proportion of students completing their courses and retention rates are now high. The percentage of high grades achieved in floristry has improved significantly and is now good.
- The success of apprentices within agreed timescales is high. It fell for advanced apprentices in 2010/11, but remains above the national rate. In response to the fall, the college increased the frequency of assessment and review in the workplace and extended the duration of the off-the-job training. The progress of current apprentices and advanced apprentices is good.
- The standard of students' work is good, especially of their practical work. Students' progression to education and employment is good. All intermediate students progress to advanced courses or employment and very high numbers of advanced students gain employment related to their courses. A good range of additional qualifications, at reasonable cost, are taken up by students.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers often plan and use learning activities well matched to students' individual needs, helping them to achieve their potential. A few lessons are too teacher led and students do not have sufficient opportunities to participate actively in their learning. Many lessons include a good variety of work related activities. Students are confident and make good use of practical resources. The use of information and learning technologies (ILT) in lessons is not fully exploited, either by teachers or students.
- Teachers make good use of a range of visits to broaden students' knowledge and experience. Students are actively and successfully involved in competitions, shows and community events.
- Resources to support teaching and learning are very good. All staff have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification and have appropriate vocational qualifications and industrial experience, which is valued by the students.

- Assessment of students' work is good. Assignment briefs are well written and contain good guidance to help students meet the criteria. Judgements on the quality of students' work are accurate and consistent. Assessors give clear and comprehensive feedback with clear indications of how students can achieve better grades.
- Personal support and guidance for students are good. Students agree actions to help them learn and behave better. Good use is made of work related practice to make students aware of what employers will require when they leave college. Attendance and punctuality are good and students are well behaved.
- Tutorials are used effectively to give constructive feedback on what students need to do to improve their work. However, students are insufficiently aware of their detailed targets for improvement and on the extent of their progress. Progress reviews for work based learners are satisfactory, but do not set effective targets for improvement or sufficiently reinforce equality, diversity and safeguarding.
- Students enjoy college. They feel safe and benefit from the care and support provided by staff. Good attention is paid to health and safety during lessons and assessments. Safeguarding and equality and diversity are good, although they are insufficiently reviewed in tutorials and workplace reviews. Opportunities to reinforce aspects of equality and diversity are sometimes missed during lessons.
- Links with employers and schools are successful. Employers significantly contribute to the education of students. For example, a wide variety of good, supportive work placements suit students' needs and help develop good skills and knowledge. Linked courses for school pupils thrive. In work-based learning, employers' do not understand clearly enough their role in providing training to help meet students' assessment targets.
- Quality improvement is good. The quality of provision has improved. Subject teams have addressed successfully low retention and success and are strongly committed to further improve students' learning and experiences. Communications between staff and with students are good. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Data are used insufficiently effectively to evaluate the effectiveness of the quality improvement plan and to set more challenging targets.

What does Plumpton College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by developing the use of ILT by teachers and students, including the college's VLE, in all lessons.
- Use student data more effectively to monitor and evaluate the success of quality improvement better and to help set more challenging targets for improvement.

Information about the inspection

42. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy principal (academic and quality), as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
43. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the 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)
Plumpton 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	968	0	766	202	0
Part-time learners	1,547	354	131	910	152
Overall effectiveness	2	1	2	2	3
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	1	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?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2				
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1				
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?	1				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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