

Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Paul Joyce HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

Address: London Road
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY2 6PR

Telephone number: 01743 342342

Information about the provider

1. Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology is a medium-sized general further education college located on the outskirts of Shrewsbury in the county of Shropshire. The college has two main campuses, one on London Road and one in Radbrook and operates from three smaller outreach centres. Courses are offered in all 15 subject areas although provision in some is small. The college offers mainly vocational courses from entry level through to higher education and also provides courses for apprentices and advanced apprentices on work-based learning programmes.
2. In July 2011 the unemployment rate in the local area was below the national rate and the proportion of school leavers achieving five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics was above average overall although attainment varied considerably in different secondary schools in the college's catchment area. The college recruits from a diverse area that includes areas of relative prosperity as well as from areas of relatively high socio-economic disadvantage. Most businesses in the local area are small and medium-sized enterprises. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups in the local population is low.
3. The college mission is 'unlocking potential, realising aspiration, achieving success' and the college has the vision 'to be first class, first choice'. The college has gained the Quality Training Standard, has investor in people status and has the matrix quality standard for information advice and guidance.
4. The college provides higher education courses on behalf of the following providers:
 - Staffordshire University
 - Edge Hill University
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - QSP Training (health, safety and waste management)
 - TRIBAL (health and social care)
 - Prospects Training (energy efficiency and renewables training)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners:	
14 to 16	132 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	148 part-time learners and 1,323 full-time learners
Foundation learning, (including 16 to 18)	178 full-time learners and 13 part-time learners
19+ (learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)	28 full-time learners and 107 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners:	
Further education (19+)	566 full-time learners and 3,637 part-time learners
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	2,926 learners
Apprenticeships:	
16 to 18	155 learners
19 to 24	335 learners
25+	103 learners
Adult and community learning	931 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
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		3
Quality of provision		3
Leadership and management		3
Safeguarding		2
Equality and diversity		3
Subject Areas		Grade
Construction		3
Hospitality and catering		2
Visual and performing arts		3
Literacy and numeracy		2

Overall effectiveness

6. This is a satisfactory college where students achieve as expected. The rate of students' progress and the standards they achieve vary across the college. They are satisfactory overall and good in some areas. At intermediate level students achieve well but at foundation, and especially at advanced level, too many students leave their course before the planned end date without achieving.
7. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Typically, lessons enable the development of an appropriate range of skills and knowledge. The best lessons are engaging, enjoyable and memorable and enable students to make good progress. However, in too many lessons, teaching does not sufficiently challenge students to make the progress of which they are capable. The use of information learning technology (ILT) is underdeveloped.
8. The college offers a wide range of courses to meet the needs and interests of students. Progression opportunities from one level to the next are good. The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is good. Partnership

working is strong and students benefit from a wide range of activities that support their personal, social and economic well-being.

9. Guidance and support are satisfactory. The support to meet students' personal, social and welfare needs is good and the provision of additional learning support is highly effective. However, target setting to aid students' progress is insufficiently developed with targets that are too vague and often not set or reviewed in a timely manner.
10. Leaders, managers and governors set a clear strategic direction and monitor performance effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good and students' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Quality improvement arrangements, including self-assessment, are adequate overall and the college has a satisfactory capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Main findings

- Success rates improved significantly during 2010/11 and are high at intermediate level. At foundation and advanced level, success rates are around corresponding national averages. Achievement rates are above average at all levels but retention rates are low on advanced level courses for students aged 16 to 18. Completion rates on work-based learning programmes and on Train to Gain courses are above average.
- Students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in receipt of additional learning support achieve well. Success rates for students from minority ethnic groups are high at intermediate and advanced levels but low at foundation level. Students from areas of high socio-economic disadvantage achieve better than their peers at foundation level but underachieve at intermediate and advanced levels.
- The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall and good in some areas. Students make satisfactory progress and develop an appropriate range of skills and knowledge relevant to their course of study. In some areas, students produce work of a high standard and the proportion achieving high grade passes has risen year-on-year to above national average.
- Students feel very safe at college and generally enjoy college life. Health, safety and well-being are very effectively promoted and enable students to make informed choices about their lifestyle. Students make a good contribution to the community especially through fund-raising and volunteering activities. Literacy and numeracy skills are very effectively developed and contribute significantly to enhancing students' social and economic well-being.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but varies across the college. The most effective lessons motivate and engage students and enable them to make good progress. However, in too many lessons, although satisfactory, students are not sufficiently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers are good role models and support students well. Working relationships are good. Students' understanding of equality and diversity is

satisfactory although opportunities are missed to further develop knowledge and understanding in lessons. Learning resources are satisfactory overall with some good resources in music, construction and engineering. The use of ILT in the classroom is underdeveloped.

- Teachers value the support and development aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, internal observers are frequently overgenerous in their grading of the quality of teaching and learning. Too little emphasis is placed on the extent of learning and the amount of progress being made by students in lessons.
- The range of provision meets the needs and interests of students and employers well. Courses offered include opportunities from entry level through to higher education. Functional skills classes are particularly successful in developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. Partnership working is good. Many partnerships are well established and benefit students by enhancing the curriculum through activities such as work experience.
- Students receive satisfactory guidance and support. They have access to a wide range of personal and welfare support services that they value highly. Individual tutorial support is good although group tutorials are not as effective. Target setting is underdeveloped and does not support students in identifying clearly how to secure improvements and make progress. Additional learning support is highly effective.
- The principal and senior managers set a clear strategic direction and set ambitious and challenging targets for the college. Governors monitor performance well and provide good challenge and support to senior leaders. Financial management and control are good and the college is in a sound financial position.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Comprehensive training ensures staff and student awareness is high. Links with external agencies are good and arrangements for completing risk assessments are highly effective. Equality and diversity is satisfactory overall although opportunities to further promote and develop students' understanding in lessons are often missed.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory overall. Most staff are involved in the process although the views of assessors on Train to Gain courses are not always sought or included in evaluating this aspect of the college's work. The self-assessment report does not always reflect the findings of other quality improvement activities and fails to identify some areas for improvement in sufficient detail. Grades awarded for aspects of the college's work are overgenerous.

What does Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students recruited onto advanced level courses are retained by reviewing the suitability of the qualifications offered and by developing flexible approaches to learning to meet individual needs and personal circumstances.
- Narrow the achievement gap for students from areas of high socio-economic disadvantage at intermediate and advanced levels and for students from

minority ethnic groups at foundation level to ensure all students realise their full potential. Provide tailored individual support programmes that closely monitor attendance and progress against clearly identified targets.

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by ensuring that activities in all lessons are motivating, engaging and designed to challenge students' individual ability levels. Ensure the pace of learning is brisk and that ILT is used where appropriate to enhance the quality of learning.
- Ensure internal observers accurately judge the quality of teaching and learning by focusing on the extent of students' learning and the progress they are making when judging the effectiveness of lessons. Use the information gathered to inform staff training and development activities to raise standards.
- Enhance the effectiveness of group tutorials by evaluating the quality of delivery and the impact on the development of students' knowledge and understanding. Provide additional support to learning mentors to improve their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and to enhance their effectiveness.
- Ensure the targets set for students in individual learning plans clearly and precisely detail how they can secure improvements in their work and aid their progress in achieving their goals. Ensure targets are set, reviewed and updated in a timely manner.
- Enhance the rigour of self-assessment by taking full account of all sources of evidence available and by ensuring all staff effectively contribute. Ensure self-assessment more accurately identifies all strengths and areas for improvement and that appropriate and timely action is taken to rectify weaknesses.
- Embed equality and diversity in teaching, learning and reviews by ensuring lesson planning and resources challenge and extend students' knowledge and understanding. Provide staff development opportunities to enhance the knowledge and understanding of staff in relation to key concepts.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the friendly supportive environment
- teaching that is interesting and motivating
- developing new skills
- the personal and welfare support services
- opportunities to progress from one level to the next
- the highly effective additional learning support
- the one-to-one support provided by learning mentors
- practical activities and group work.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the quality of teaching in some lessons

- the use of ILT in classes
- the relevance of group tutorials
- social areas
- accommodation and resources in some areas
- target setting and the use of individual learning plans.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the flexibility of college staff
- assessors with good subject knowledge
- good working relationships
- the good development of apprentices' skills and knowledge
- the response to meeting business needs.

What employers would like to see improved:

- their knowledge of the content of courses
- their involvement in the reviews of apprentices' progress
- their involvement in curriculum development and evaluation.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

11. The college has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Success rates improved significantly during 2010/11 and are now at or above national averages following slower increases than the national rate in previous years. Improvements have been made to accommodation and resources that benefit students and the college remains in a sound financial position. The principal, senior managers and governors provide clear strategic leadership and set challenging and ambitious targets for student success. Quality assurance and quality improvement actions are satisfactory overall although they are not fully effective in securing consistent improvement across the college or in moving provision from satisfactory to consistently good or better.
12. The overall effectiveness of the college and the quality of provision remain satisfactory, as they were at the last inspection. Whilst improvements have been made to aspects of provision, the college has not fully rectified all the areas identified as requiring improvement at the last inspection. The self-assessment process has improved but is not sharply aligned with other effective improvement initiatives and consequently does not always accurately identify areas for improvement or evaluate performance. The process for observing teaching and learning has improved but is overgenerous in its evaluations and teaching and learning remain satisfactory overall. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses have improved and are now satisfactory, although retention rates remain well below national averages.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

13. Success rates improved significantly during 2010/11 and at foundation and advanced levels are around the corresponding national average rates of similar colleges. At intermediate level success rates are high both for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults. Achievement rates are above national averages at all levels and students who remain on courses generally achieve well. However, on advanced level courses for students aged 16 to 18, which constitute the majority of college provision, retention rates are low and have been so for the last three years. Success rates for learners on apprenticeship and Train to Gain courses are high.
14. The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall and good in some areas such as hospitality and catering and on some courses in construction and in visual and performing arts. The proportion of students achieving passes with high grades is improving and is above average at whole college level but varies between different courses. Students develop appropriate skills and knowledge relative to their course of study and generally make the progress expected based on their prior attainment.

15. The college has been successful in narrowing achievement gaps over time and closely monitors the success rates of different groups of students. Success rates for students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those in receipt of additional learning support, are above the college average. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are well above the college average at intermediate and advanced levels but are significantly below the college average at foundation level. Students from areas of relatively high socio-economic disadvantage achieve well at foundation level but underachieve compared to their peers at intermediate and advanced levels.
16. The majority of students enjoy college life and feel very safe. Health, safety and well-being are very effectively promoted and this enables students to make informed decisions about their lifestyle. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well through functional skills' courses and together with other skills promoted through the tutorial programme contribute significantly to students' social and economic well-being. Students make a good contribution to the community and are involved in an impressive range of fund-raising and volunteering activities.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although the quality varies across the college. In the best lessons learning is well paced, challenging and is supported by a good range of activities that keep students engaged and motivated. Teaching in workshop or studio practical lessons is usually more effective than classroom based teaching. In less effective lessons students are not challenged sufficiently well and do not always make the progress that they should, or that they are capable of making. In these lessons either the pace of learning is too slow or students remain passive for long periods of time.
18. ILT is used satisfactorily to promote independent learning on many courses and the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is increasingly well used by students. However, in many lessons, opportunities to use ILT to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning are missed, despite classrooms being well equipped with interactive whiteboards and staff being well supported in developing their skills to use the technology. The promotion of equality and diversity in learning is satisfactory overall, although opportunities are missed in a number of lessons and reviews to develop students' knowledge and understanding further.
19. Most students speak positively about their highly supportive teachers. Many teachers are good role models who have good subject knowledge and relevant industry experience. Students value the feedback provided by teachers and assessors that often details what they need to do to improve. Assessment is frequent and fair with work being carefully marked and returned promptly. Assessment in the workplace is well planned and flexible to meet the needs of employers and students. Internal verification is thorough and appropriately upholds standards.

20. In many areas teachers make best use of the available accommodation to promote learning through attractive displays of students' work and informative posters. The Roland Centre provides an excellent resource for music students and the new technology building provides excellent space and resources for practical learning in construction and engineering.
21. The college's lesson observation process appropriately identifies the key strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning, although it focuses too much on teachers' and students' activities and not enough on learning and the progress that students make. Inspection evidence identifies a mismatch between the grades awarded by inspectors and those awarded through the college's process with grades awarded by college observers being too generous. The college continues to invest in resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning and staff speak highly of the team of advanced learning coaches and the range of development activity provided, including 'sharing fairs' and staff conferences.
22. The college offers a comprehensive range of courses that meets the needs of students and employers well. An extensive choice of courses is offered at entry level and good progression routes to higher level study are provided, including many options at higher education level. Well organised arrangements for functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are particularly successful in meeting students' needs. Arrangements for students who have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well established and enable them to make a smooth transition to college life. Students have good access to a wide range of personal and welfare support services that are highly effective in meeting their personal development needs. Employers' needs are well catered for through an increasing number of work-based learning courses.
23. Partnership working is good. The college works closely with partners at both strategic and operational levels and has strong links with local schools, Shropshire County Council's adult and community learning and work-based learning provision, local businesses and employers' groups, as well as the voluntary sector. Many partnerships are well established and have a beneficial impact on enhancing the quality of provision offered to students through, for example, work experience opportunities. Partners are positive about working relationships with the college and they view the college as flexible and responsive to their needs.
24. Support to meet personal, social and welfare needs is good. Students have access to a wide range of support services and specialist staff that they value highly. Full-time students receive good one-to-one tutorial support although group tutorial activities are not as effective. Additional learning support is good and enables students to complete and achieve successfully. However, target setting to aid students' academic progress is less effective.
25. The recent introduction of an online individual learning plan has not yet secured sufficient improvements in the quality of target setting and monitoring of full-time students. Too many students have targets for their main qualification aim

that do not sufficiently or clearly support them in identifying how to secure improvements in their work or identify specific measurable targets to aid progress. Many targets are not identified or recorded in a timely manner. On work-based learning programmes for apprentices too many reviews are not completed within the required timescales.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

26. Governors, the principal and senior managers have set a clear strategic direction, with a strong focus on improving students' outcomes which is well understood and supported by staff. The college is meeting many of the targets it set itself although it did not achieve all the success rate targets set over the last two years. Senior managers have a good understanding of performance across the college and have initiated strategies to address identified issues such as low retention. The college plays a key role in local partnerships and has very productive strategic links with employers and local organisations. Subcontracted provision is managed and monitored effectively.
27. Governors have a broad and relevant range of skills and are fully involved in the college's strategic planning processes and have contributed to the increased focus on setting and monitoring key aspects of performance. The college has appointed a significant proportion of new governors in the last two years and is taking appropriate steps to address the low number of females on the board. Governors have received appropriate training and briefings on a number of relevant issues, including safeguarding and equality and diversity. They have effective arrangements to ensure the accountability of senior post holders and receive regular and detailed reports on college performance. They effectively evaluate the quality of provision and provide a good level of challenge and support.
28. Safeguarding is well prioritised across the college as demonstrated by the very good and thorough training for all staff in the past year. The college has four designated officers and a designated governor with responsibility for safeguarding. The college has a comprehensive single central record and has robust arrangements for making criminal record bureau checks. Risk assessment procedures are good and effective. The college has very good links with external agencies for sharing of best practice and referral and has good links with the local safeguarding children board. Safeguarding incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
29. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college has an appropriate single equality scheme and clear arrangements for undertaking equality impact assessments, although it has been slow in ensuring the full range of its activities are suitably assessed. It monitors the performance of different groups well at both course and whole college level. Performance gaps between male and female learners and between learners from advantaged and disadvantaged postcode areas are narrowing. The college has carried out satisfactory training in equality and diversity in the last year. The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is underdeveloped and whilst

students have a satisfactory understanding of key concepts, opportunities are missed to further develop, reinforce or promote equality and diversity in lessons. On work-based learning programmes, comments on equality matters at reviews fail to sufficiently test or promote learners' knowledge and understanding.

30. Arrangements to engage students in decision-making processes continue to improve with initiatives such as the student council, student mentors, student ambassadors and involving students in college committees. In the current year these arrangements are being further revised and strengthened but it is too early to gauge the full impact. The college acknowledges the need for further work to involve part-time students. The college has established procedures to gather student feedback through surveys and forums and there are a number of examples where feedback has been used to improve aspects of provision. Strategies to engage with students on Train to Gain programmes are insufficiently developed.
31. The self-assessment process has been revised to make it more relevant to programme teams and is now better used as a continuous improvement tool across the college. Most staff are satisfactorily involved in the self-assessment process although the views of workplace assessors are not sufficiently sought or acted upon to aid improvement for this aspect of the college's work. Student and employer surveys are used appropriately to inform self-assessment. A number of quality initiatives such as 'mini-inspections' and 'special measures' procedures have been successful in identifying areas for improvement and in tackling underperformance. However, information gathered during these processes does not always contribute sufficiently well to self-assessment at course level or inform quality improvement planning. Some self-assessment reports overstate strengths, are insufficiently self-critical and overgenerous in their grading.
32. The college manages its finances very well and is in a sound financial position. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall and beneficial improvements have been made in some areas with further improvements planned. Given the satisfactory rate of student progress and learner outcomes the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Subject areas

Construction

Grade 3

Context

33. Courses are offered in construction crafts, building services and in technical and professional studies at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. At the time of inspection 180 students were enrolled on full- or part-time courses and a further 134 students were on work-based learning courses as apprentices, advanced apprentices or were completing qualifications in the workplace. Most students are male and are aged 16 to 18, attending full-time.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on most courses are high and have improved when compared to the previous year. Completion rates on work-based learning courses are above average and many students complete within the timescales set for achievement.
- Students make good progress in the development of their skills and knowledge. In both the college and the workplace they demonstrate good practical skills and talk knowledgeably about the application of theory. The standard of student work varies between different courses and is satisfactory overall. Attendance rates are satisfactory and students are punctual to lessons.
- Progression rates from one level to the next and to higher education or to apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. Students develop good literacy and numeracy skills and produce evidence portfolios to required standards. Students feel safe whilst at college and most adopt safe working practices in practical environments in both the college and in the workplace. However, signage in most practical workshops, whilst clear, falls short of industry best practice and many learners lack an understanding of their personal responsibility for health and safety.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and enable the development of an appropriate range of skills and knowledge related to the course. Demonstrations are satisfactory and teachers use their industry experience well to apply learning to real-life scenarios.
- In the best lessons teachers maintain students' interest by providing a good range of thought-provoking activities that successfully motivate, engage and challenge them. In less effective lessons, although satisfactory overall, teachers provide too much information without asking enough of learners. ILT is used satisfactorily where appropriate.
- The range of courses and levels offered are good at meeting the needs and interests of students and employers. A wide range of different trade occupations is offered with good progression opportunities available to higher level courses including to a foundation degree programme. Work-based courses are flexible and meet the needs of employers needing to improve the skills of their workforce.

- Partnership working is good. The college has productive partnerships with major employers and housing associations that have led to new learning programmes that meet the needs both of students and employers. Benefits include the effective development of the complex maintenance operations programme and work placements for full-time learners.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. Most students are now placed on an appropriate course and receive satisfactory support to help them achieve their learning goal. However, target setting for work-based students is weak and some initial advice and guidance is poor for plumbing students.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Practical resources are satisfactory overall and the new technology building provides good practical resources for carpentry and joinery. Staff generally well work together and are supportive of each other. However, the plumbing provision is not effectively managed and the quality of the student experience is poor.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Students treat each other with respect and there is a good emphasis on challenging bullying and harassment both in college and in the workplace. However, many apprentices, and some staff, have a limited understanding of equality and diversity issues and work-based reviews do not adequately promote or develop students' knowledge or understanding.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory. Quality assurance activities monitor and improve provision although their findings are not always included fully in the self-assessment report. Several key areas for improvement, while known to the college, do not appear in the draft self-assessment report for the curriculum area. Work-based provision is not sufficiently evaluated and does not contribute sufficiently to curriculum self-assessment.

What does Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring all lessons are planned to meet individual students' needs and by engaging students in a wide range of activities that they find motivating, enjoyable and memorable. Use ILT to enhance the quality and enjoyment of lessons.
- Develop students' understanding of their personal responsibilities for health and safety by using every opportunity to reinforce best practice during practical lessons. Enable students to complete health and safety risk assessments before completing practical tasks.
- Ensure the targets set for students support the monitoring of their progress by setting precise individual targets and by completing reviews in a timely manner.
- Extend students' knowledge of equality and diversity by ensuring lessons and reviews develop their understanding of rights and responsibilities where appropriate to do so.
- Enhance the effectiveness of self-assessment by evaluating all aspects of provision, including work-based courses, and by reviewing all available evidence from quality assurance monitoring activity. Urgently improve the provision in plumbing by addressing staffing issues.

Hospitality and catering

Grade 2

Context

34. The college offers full- and part-time courses from foundation to advanced level in professional cookery and a range of restaurant, food service and hospitality supervision qualifications. At the time of inspection 139 students were enrolled on courses with 92 on full-time courses and 47 on part-time courses. The college provides work-based learning courses for 12 apprentices. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18, attending full-time.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high on most courses at all levels. Students develop good practical skills and enjoy their courses. They make good progress and are well supported in developing knowledge and understanding. Attendance rates are high and students are punctual to lessons.
- Students develop good employability skills and courses equip them with the required skills to work in industry. Students adopt safe working practices and pay close attention to health and hygiene requirements. Students work purposefully in a real life working environment and benefit from the experience gained in staffing the college restaurant.
- The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and assessment is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and prepared to meet individual learning needs. Practical lessons are mostly good with a strong focus on skills' development, and timely production and service. Most students enjoy a high quality practical learning experience.
- Theory sessions are satisfactory. Lessons enable the development of appropriate knowledge and are closely aligned to practical activities. However, whole class activities are not always sufficiently motivating and often lack pace. Group work is not always well planned and the use of ILT is underdeveloped.
- The provision is good at meeting the needs and interest of students. Progression routes are good and enable students to progress on both full- and part-time courses. Progression rates from one level to the next are high. Enrichment opportunities are wide and varied and include competitions and an annual two-way exchange of students with a hospitality college in Italy as well as visits to trade exhibitions in England.
- Partnership working is satisfactory. The partnership with the food service provider in the college is good and provides students with experience in food preparation and service in the refectory. However, partnerships with other external organisations and local employers are not well developed.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. Arrangements for group tutorial activities are not sufficiently contextualised and students question their value. Target setting arrangements have recently changed and more appropriate targets are now set for students to achieve. Additional learning support and the support provided by subject teachers is good.

- Leadership and management are good. Strong leadership at curriculum level ensures effective arrangements are in place to monitor and improve provision. The self-assessment report is inclusive and accurately identifies most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified at inspection.
- Operational management at course level is highly effective. Courses are well managed to ensure students receive a high quality learning experience. Good practice is effectively shared between teaching teams and learning coaches provide good levels of support for staff.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The performance of different groups of students is effectively monitored and achievement gaps have narrowed. Students have a satisfactory understanding of key concepts although opportunities to further develop or promote students' knowledge and understanding in lessons are sometimes missed.
- Students' views are used very effectively to promote improvement in provision. Student representatives contribute significantly to evaluating the quality of provision and their views are used to improve resources.
- Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Resources are well managed and utilised to support students' learning and progress. Students benefit from using a wide range of equipment and from the experience of working in different environments. Plans to further enhance accommodation and resources are appropriate.

What does Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

- Make theory lessons more motivating and engaging by ensuring activities, including group work, are planned to meet students' individual needs. Ensure the pace of learning is sufficiently challenging and use ILT more effectively to make learning more interesting, enjoyable and memorable.
- Enhance the curriculum by extending the range of partnerships with external organisation to give more students the opportunity to complete work experience and to enable employers to contribute to teaching and learning.
- Enhance the quality and effectiveness of group tutorials by contextualising their content to make learning points more relevant to hospitality and catering settings.
- Enhance students' understanding of equality and diversity by ensuring opportunities to celebrate diversity and to challenge stereotypes are included in lessons where appropriate to do so.

Visual and performing arts

Grade 3

Context

35. Courses are offered from foundation level to higher level and include qualifications in art and design, 3D design, music technology, music production, fashion and the performing arts. At the time of inspection 260 students were on courses with the majority aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low and just over half of all students are female.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Overall success rates are around the national average. Success rates are high on most courses at foundation and intermediate level. Achievement rates are high on many courses and a good and increasing proportion of students achieve passes with high grades. However, retention rates are below average on many courses and too many students leave before the planned end date without achieving.
- The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall and is good on some courses. Students make satisfactory progress although the rate of progress varies between different courses and in different lessons. Progression rates to higher education and into industry-related employment are high. Health and safety is reinforced well and students feel very safe whilst at college.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and enable students to develop appropriate technical, creative and presentational skills. A wide range of activities enhances the quality of learning and students regularly visit exhibitions, work with visiting artists and perform publicly.
- Teaching in the best lessons is highly effective. Staff plan lessons well to challenge students' creative thinking and encourage discussion and debate. Learning outcomes are clearly defined and students are fully engaged, working on interesting and enjoyable briefs. However, in too many lessons, although satisfactory overall, opportunities are missed to involve students or activities do not always sufficiently challenge students.
- Assessment practice is variable. On many courses students receive detailed feedback that clearly identifies areas for further improvement. Students value this constructive feedback and use it to help improve their work and achieve higher grades. However, the quality is inconsistent across the area and not all teachers provide sufficient detail to help students improve their work or achieve higher grades.
- Courses meet the needs and interests of students well. Courses are offered at all levels with good progression opportunities from one level to the next and into higher education and employment. Students can access a wide range of specialisms including theatre, art and design, fashion, textiles and music.

- Partnership working is good. The college works with a wide range of organisations that provide good opportunities for students to work alongside industry practitioners and to have access to the latest industry-standard equipment. Students have been involved in many beneficial activities through the college's work with partners including the making of a full length feature film during the summer break.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. One-to-one support during tutorials and the support provided by subject teachers are good. However, target setting to aid students' progress and help them improve is underdeveloped. Targets are not always sufficiently detailed or precise enough and not all students have target grades recorded on individual learning plans.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are well supported and regular meetings are held to share good practice and discuss operational matters. However, self-assessment is overgenerous with some strengths overstated and some areas for improvement not fully identified.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Students are aware of key concepts and the curriculum adequately develops knowledge and understanding. Some students benefit from projects being used specifically to promote further understanding of different diversity themes through activities such as cultural exchange projects.
- Student views are used very effectively to promote improvement in provision. Issues raised are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students are very complimentary about the way in which their views are sought and acted upon to improve their experiences.
- Specialist accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. A range of specialist studios supports curriculum delivery to ensure students receive a professional experience. Resources for music are good and students have good access to computers and learning resources to enable them to complete their work outside of classes. A minority of classrooms are too small for the large number of students on some courses.

What does Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

- Raise retention rates on courses to at least national average levels by identifying early the students at risk of leaving courses and by providing additional tailored support to help students continue with their studies.
- Ensure all students make consistently good progress by planning lessons to challenge individual learners. Involve and engage students in all lessons ensuring the pace of learning is well suited to individual ability levels.
- Ensure the consistency of assessment feedback to enable all students to improve their work by providing guidance that details precisely what students need to do to achieve higher grades.
- Ensure target setting aids students' progress by recording target grades on individual learning plans in sufficient detail to enable close and timely monitoring of performance.

- Ensure the accuracy of self-assessment by reviewing all available evidence and including all quality assurance monitoring activity. Clearly identify areas for improvement and closely monitor improvement plans.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 2

Context

36. At the time of inspection 55 learners were enrolled on part-time courses in adult literacy or numeracy. Courses are offered at entry, foundation or intermediate levels at two college sites and in one community location. In addition, 1,741 students, mainly aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses, attend functional skills classes in either mathematics or English as part of their programme of study towards another main qualification aim.

Key findings

- Outcomes for adult literacy and numeracy students are good overall and outstanding on literacy courses at foundation and intermediate levels. Success rates on these courses are well above national averages and have improved from previous years. Success rates in numeracy at intermediate level are high but too many learners that start on entry level courses in literacy and numeracy leave before the planned completion date.
- Outcomes for students on functional skills courses in English and mathematics are good. Success, retention and pass rates are mostly above corresponding national averages and have improved year on year since being introduced in 2008/09.
- Students on functional skills courses enjoy their learning and contribute enthusiastically. They are entered for the highest level they can attain to increase their employability. In both functional skills classes and in adult literacy and numeracy lessons, students develop good skills that are useful and relevant to everyday life and work.
- The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning in both adult literacy and numeracy lessons and in functional skills classes are good. Students benefit from well qualified and experienced teachers that make learning interesting, relevant and enjoyable. Students develop good skills that contribute well to their social and economic well-being.
- In the most effective lessons students work collaboratively, making choices about different activities and discussing learning points with insight and knowledge. In functional skills classes most teachers make good use of topics of current interest and use relevant vocational contexts. In less successful lessons tasks are too lengthy or complex for students and in some adult numeracy lessons worksheets are used too frequently.
- Courses in both adult literacy and numeracy and in functional skills are particularly responsive to meeting students' needs and interests. Courses enhance students' employability and boost their confidence. The functional skills programme for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is appropriately taught using practical activities and develops students' self-confidence and self-esteem.

- Partnership working is satisfactory. Links have been established with partners including other providers to maintain the availability of literacy and numeracy courses in the community despite the reduction in provision within the college.
- Guidance and support for students is good. Teachers use detailed learner profiles when planning lessons. Learning facilitators work effectively in functional skills lessons to support individuals with additional learning needs or behavioural problems.
- Adult literacy and numeracy classes benefit from the utilisation of volunteers who offer mainly effective support. However, a minority of volunteers are too directive in their approach and detract from the development of students' independent learning skills.
- Target setting is good on functional skills courses. Students take responsibility for setting initial targets on electronic learning plans and teachers help them identify the steps they need to take to achieve. Targets for adult literacy and numeracy students are not as well developed. Often targets are not specific to individual students and do not contain sufficient detail to aid progress.
- Leadership and management are good. The functional skills programme is particularly well managed. A coherent strategy and central coordination of curriculum development and quality issues help maintain standards. The approach to functional skills teaching and assessment is good.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Literacy and numeracy provision is now integrated within the college and enhances inclusion. Provision concentrates on addressing the needs of vulnerable learners and enhances their skills. Opportunities are missed to explicitly celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes during a minority of lessons.

What does Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?

- Raise retention rates on entry level literacy and numeracy courses by closely monitoring student attendance patterns, especially during periods of vulnerability such as early in the course and around holiday times, and by providing supportive contact between lessons.
- Ensure all lessons are effective in developing students' skills by sharing best practice in the use of contextualised learning activities to make learning relevant to everyday life and work.
- Enhance the effectiveness of the support provided by volunteers by producing detailed guidance on how they can most effectively help students without detracting from the development of their independent learning skills.
- Ensure target setting on adult and literacy and numeracy courses aids students' progress by devising targets that are based on individual needs.
- Enhance students' understanding of equality and diversity by ensuring opportunities to celebrate diversity and to challenge stereotypes are included in lessons where appropriate to do so.

Information about the inspection

37. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's vice principal curriculum 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 body, 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.
38. 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)**Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology**

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	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	1,889	1,323	566	0
Part-time learners	4,996	148	3,637	1,211
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	2
Capacity to improve	3			
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
How safe do learners feel?	2			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2			
Quality of provision	3	3	3	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3			
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
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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