

# Hereford College of Arts

## Reinspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130714

**Name of lead inspector:** Phil Romain HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 18 May 2012

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

**Address:** Folly Lane  
Hereford  
Herefordshire  
HR1 1LT

**Telephone number:** 01432 273359

## Information about the college

1. Hereford College of Arts is a small specialist arts college located in the city of Hereford. It is one of three city-based further education colleges and offers further and higher education provision. The majority of students are on advanced level courses. In addition, the college provides a foundation level arts course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
2. In 2011/12, the overall number of students enrolled at the college is 396. The large majority of these students are on visual arts courses; other students are on courses in performing arts and music. Most students are of White British heritage. The large majority of students are recruited from Herefordshire or Worcestershire. The college's mission is 'to provide outstanding education and employability in the creative arts'.
3. Herefordshire has a relatively high employment rate. The county contains few areas of deprivation; however, five of the most deprived areas are in South Hereford. Educational attainment of pupils aged 16 in Herefordshire is slightly higher than nationally.
4. The college was last inspected in March 2011 and was judged inadequate. Of the two subjects inspected, performing arts was graded as inadequate and visual arts as satisfactory. Leadership and management were inadequate.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> Further education (16 to18)	396 full-time learners 3 part-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)	78 full-time learners 18 part-time learners

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Performing arts	3
Visual arts	3

## Overall effectiveness

5. This is a satisfactory college offering a satisfactory quality of provision in visual and performing arts. Managers and governors responded positively to the previous inspection, raising ambition and expectations throughout the college. As a result, most aspects of provision are now improving, although there remains work to do. Most learners who complete their course are successful; however the number who achieve high grades is only average. An increasing number of learners progress to higher education.
6. Teaching and learning, although improving, remain satisfactory as in too many lessons learners are insufficiently challenged to extend their thinking, share ideas or articulate their thoughts. In the better lessons however, learners are challenged and stretched to produce vibrant and exciting individual work to a good standard.
7. Learners enjoy attending Hereford College of Arts and consequently attendance rates are high. They receive good guidance and support and an increasing number remain at the college to complete their courses. As a result, success rates have improved.

8. Partnership working is strong and learners benefit from a wide range of guest speakers, visiting artists, musicians and opportunities to work on live project briefs.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. In 2010/11, success rates were above the national average having improved markedly since the last inspection. However, success rates for functional skills awards remained low. The college's data for current learners indicate that retention has continued to improve, and that success rates for most courses will be sustained in 2011/12.
- Learners make satisfactory progress overall although progress is better on performing arts courses than on visual arts courses. Pass rates are high on most courses; however, the proportion of learners who achieve high grades is just below the national average for arts, media and publishing courses.
- The standards of learners' work are high. Learners feel safe and enjoy college life and as a result, attendance rates are high. Learners make a good contribution to the community through an extensive range of public performances and exhibitions.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in performing arts. Lessons are most effective when teachers plan their lessons to take account of individual learners' needs, using a variety of activities to stretch and challenge learners. In too many lessons, however, learners are inadequately challenged to extend their thinking, share ideas, or articulate their thoughts and progress is therefore much slower.
- Assessment and feedback are mostly well planned and learners make good use of the constructive comments teachers make to improve their work. However, a minority of teachers do not evaluate students' work sufficiently critically and as a result students make less progress than they could.
- The range of provision is satisfactory to meet the needs and interests of learners. Arrangements for learners to develop their functional skills have improved since the last inspection. Progression to higher education is satisfactory overall and good from the foundation diploma. Learners' broader understanding of their subject and opportunities for personal, social development and cultural diversity develop appropriately.
- Partnership working is good. Employers and local business organisations speak very highly of the college's flexible and prompt response to their needs. Links with employers inform and enrich the curriculum well. The college also works closely with local schools, colleges, and other organisations to provide learners with a wide range of opportunities to develop their wider skills.
- Guidance and support are good. A significant improvement to the arrangements for providing initial advice and guidance means that learners are now mostly on the right course. Individual support is particularly effective. Learners' academic progress is monitored well through regular individual review meetings with their personal tutor. However, group tutorials are less well developed.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff accept and work towards the ambitious targets set by governors and senior managers to promote high aspirations for their learners. This has resulted in improvements to the monitoring of learners' progress and reviews of the effectiveness of courses. Actions to improve teaching and learning and functional skills and to challenge learners to aim higher are not yet as successful.
- Managers and staff promote equality and diversity very effectively. Learners enjoy a wide range of activities which incorporate themes related to culture, belief, respect and celebrating differences. Managers analyse the success rates of different groups of learners and no group underachieves. Community cohesion projects to engage and inspire young people at risk are successful.
- The self-assessment process includes the views of learners, but the college does not systematically collect the views of external stakeholders to inform the self-assessment report and improvement plan. The self-assessment report does not give sufficient emphasis to all of the areas for improvement noted by inspectors although the improvement plan is comprehensive.
- Managers monitor progress against targets and the post-inspection action plan very effectively. Very few staff have been appraised in the last two years. Team leaders are insufficiently aware of how best to interpret and interrogate data. Although teachers have received much development on teaching and learning, they remain satisfactory. Curriculum management is satisfactory.

### **What does Hereford College of Arts need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the proportion of learners achieving high grades and exceeding current expectations by setting and monitoring more demanding targets and providing more stretch and challenge in lessons.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by strengthening the rigour of the lesson observation process, ensuring that actions for improvement are explicit and that monitoring is diligent.
- Improve all learners' English language and mathematical skills by ensuring that they have the opportunity to study functional skills and that success rates increase.
- Ensure that all learners benefit from opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of personal, social and cultural diversity through a more consistent approach to high quality group tutorials.
- Ensure the rigorous and effective implementation of the performance management system and the associated staff development, so that all staff benefit from an annual appraisal and are enabled to work more effectively to improve the quality of provision for their learners.
- Ensure that the self-assessment reports at all levels include the most important issues and that graded judgements correlate with, and are supported by, valid and realistic strengths and areas for improvement.

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

### **What learners like:**

- being treated as professionals
- the sense of belonging to a community
- the enthusiastic, passionate and knowledgeable teachers
- the additional learning support which helps them to succeed
- the relaxation areas (the hub).

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

- having better classrooms, studios and work areas, especially the learning support area which is too small
- more external trips, and better organisation of those that take place
- the organisation and planning at the beginning of courses.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 3**

9. The overall effectiveness of provision and the quality of the performing arts provision have improved since the last inspection. Most success and retention rates have improved in 2010/11 compared with 2009/10. Managers have improved most of the areas of concern identified at the last inspection. Leadership and management have improved, but outcomes for learners, quality of provision, teaching and learning and the quality of the visual arts provision are still satisfactory. The provision of functional skills is still an area for development, as is the involvement of excellent teachers in the sharing of best practice.
10. Quality assurance and improvement processes have improved. Governors are more aware of the key indicators and targets that they should consider. Managers have increased their monitoring of performance against college, course and learner targets. Staff can access data and monitor targets more effectively, but not all are confident in their interrogation and analysis of data. Despite much staff development on the observation process and on improving teaching and learning, they remain satisfactory. The leadership and management self-assessment report judges most aspects satisfactory, but has few key areas for improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

11. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The headline success rate for all long courses has improved since the previous inspection. In 2010/11 it was above the national average of general further education colleges. Headline long course success rates on performing arts courses have improved and are now around the national rates. Headline success rates on long courses in visual arts are above the national rates. Success rates for functional skills awards in 2010/11 were very low. The college's data for current learners indicate that retention has continued to improve and that success rates for most courses will be sustained in 2011/12.
12. Learners make satisfactory progress overall although progress is better on performing arts courses than on visual arts courses. Standards of work are high. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities following a personal and social development programme make good progress and achieve well. There is no significant difference in the achievement rates of learners from minority ethnic groups, by gender, by age or by disability. Learners in receipt of additional learning support achieved better results than their peers in 2010/11.
13. Pass rates are high on most courses and the proportion of learners who gain high grades, although higher than the national rate for general further

education colleges, is just below the national rate for arts, media and publishing courses.

14. Learners feel safe at college and enjoy college life. Attendance rates are high. The skills developed by learners improve their social and economic well-being and learners are suitably knowledgeable about risks so they can make informed choices about their safety, health and well-being. Learners make a good contribution to the community through an extensive programme of exhibitions and performances.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 3**

15. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, which concurs with the college's self-assessment grade. However, inspectors found that too many lessons were no better than satisfactory, particularly in visual arts. The teaching and learning observation process is improved and is satisfactory. However, too many teachers fail to self-assess accurately the impact of their own teaching, placing too much emphasis on their teaching rather than on learning. Teaching assistants provide good support for students.
16. Teaching is best when teachers use their comprehensive knowledge of learners' abilities to plan a wide range of tailored activities that engage and stimulate each individual. These lessons are interesting and stretch and challenge learners. In these lessons learners are able to work independently and produce vibrant and exciting individual work to a good standard. As a result learners gain confidence and are able to express their ideas and views fluently. In too many lessons, however, learners are inadequately challenged to extend their thinking, share ideas or articulate their thoughts. In these lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' needs when planning and as a result the level of work is sometimes too low.
17. Teachers plan assessment well and provide learners with feedback that clearly shows them how to improve further. However, in visual arts some feedback is insufficiently critical or detailed. In the most successful assessments, learners are well equipped to determine their own targets and take a mature responsibility for their own progress. Learners value their individual learning plans and their targets for improvement, which enable teachers and learners to review progress effectively.
18. The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. The range of courses provides appropriate progression opportunities and a good range of specialist options in visual arts. Progression to higher education is satisfactory overall and good from the foundation diploma course. A personal and social development programme for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables learners to experience the creative and performing arts and to participate fully in the life of the college. Learners benefit from a wide range



of enrichment activities. Arrangements for learners to develop their functional skills have improved since the last inspection but are not yet sufficient.

19. Partnership working is good. Employers and local business enterprise organisations speak very highly of the college's flexible and prompt response to their needs. Links with employers inform and enrich the curriculum well. Guest speakers, visiting artists, musicians and opportunities to work on live project briefs develop learner's knowledge, understanding and awareness of the creative arts industries well.
20. Guidance and support are good. Significant improvements in initial advice and guidance means that learners are now better informed and prepared for the demands of their courses. Teachers monitor learners' academic progress well through regular individual meetings. Group tutorials help develop learners' awareness and understanding of a range of wider issues such as bullying and drug and alcohol abuse but the quality and content is too variable across the college to provide a consistently good learning experience for all. Learners receive appropriate pastoral support and have access to a range of specialist support agencies when required. An increased focus on attendance monitoring has had a positive impact and attendance is now good.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 3**

21. Governors and senior managers have increased their expectations and promotion of ambition since the last inspection. They introduced challenging key performance indicators for 2011/12 and managers at all levels carefully monitor progress against these targets. Staff at all levels are committed to meet the demanding targets for attendance, retention and achievement and work closely with their learners to strive to meet them. Staff morale is high. Success rates increased in 2010/11 compared with 2009/10.
22. The impact of the last inspection on improving governance is significant. Recently appointed governors enhance the range of expertise and experience of the governing body. Governors are more aware of which data are important and how to challenge managers. They receive annual reports on progress against the safeguarding and equality and diversity action plans and have received training in both areas. Governors are rightly aware of the need to embed the improvements made to functional skills, teaching and learning, retention, monitoring of learners' progress and performance management.
23. All staff, governors and volunteers have undergone enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and a secure single central register is in place. Two managers and one governor have responsibility for safeguarding. Governors and staff receive training on safeguarding matters appropriate to their roles. Learners understand bullying, harassment, intimidation and safeguarding matters, including e-safety. Health and safety are managed effectively. Appropriate risk assessments and incident reporting systems are in place.

24. Managers have produced a single equalities scheme, action plan and equality and diversity impact measures, which they monitor closely. They analyse learners' outcomes by different groups and conclude correctly that no learners consistently underachieve by virtue of their age, gender, ethnicity, learning difficulty, disability or learning support need. The college meets its general and specific duties, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, well. The college promotes community cohesion well. Staff promote equality and diversity themes through lessons and learners' activities very effectively. Staff and learners are quick to challenge any form of stereotyping.
25. The views of learners are used well to improve the quality of their learning experiences and college life. Learner representatives contribute effectively to the frequent course reviews. Staff have good links with external agencies that result in improvements to the quality of provision. The college does not systematically elicit the views of external stakeholders in order to inform the self-assessment report and action plan. Partnerships to improve provision in performing arts are underdeveloped.
26. Quality assurance arrangements and self-assessment have improved and are now satisfactory. Managers are more self-critical and realistic in their self-assessments. They monitor progress through the post-inspection action plan very effectively. A new performance management system is close to implementation. Curriculum management is satisfactory.
27. Most teachers are teacher trained or are working towards appropriate qualifications. Managers have made good use of financial reserves to improve accommodation, resources and equipment to high standards. Financial health and management are good. The college failed to meet recruitment targets for learners aged 16 to 18 in 2010/11 and more significantly in 2011/12. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory; value for money is satisfactory.

## Subject areas

### Performing arts

### Grade 3

#### Context

28. The college currently offers the extended diploma in performing arts and the extended diploma in music. The majority of the 92 advanced level learners are aged 16-18 and attend full-time. Most learners attending at the time of inspection are from a white British background.

#### Key findings

- Success rates are satisfactory. At the last inspection they had been very low for a considerable period. Since then overall success rates have improved to the national rate. Rates for learners aged 16-18 on advanced courses have improved to above the national rate. However, for the small number of adult learners rates have improved but remain low.
- Retention is now good. The number of learners leaving their course before the completion date has declined, with the majority of learners who started their course still in attendance at the time of the inspection. The retention rate for second year music learners in 2010/11 is low. Attendance has improved considerably. During the inspection attendance was very high at 95%.
- Standards of work are high. Music learners develop high levels of musicianship and are able to play, sing, compose, rehearse and perform their own material confidently. In a performance lesson learners worked professionally as a production team to plan, rehearse and shoot scenes for a film project. In a rehearsal for a production of *Machinal* learners successfully created mood and atmosphere. Standards of behaviour are good.
- The majority of learners make good progress. All learners who completed their course in 2010/11 achieved their qualification and in music a high proportion achieved high grades. However, many music learners do not make the progress expected of them taking into account their starting points. The numbers of learners achieving high grades in performing arts, though improving, remain low.
- Through public performances and involvement in the community, learners develop subject specific and personal skills that improve their employability and future prospects. A high proportion of learners in performing arts are applying to and securing places at university. The number of music learners entering higher education has reduced and is low. Very few learners improve their literacy skills sufficiently to prepare them for employment.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan purposeful lessons and use a good range of resources to stimulate and support learning. Theory lessons are lively and well managed. Learners studying singing use clear and regularly reviewed short-term targets to drive their progress. In a minority of lessons

learners are not stretched and challenged sufficiently. Learning resources and accommodation are good.

- Assessment practice is good. Teachers provide detailed written and verbal feedback on work that clearly identifies possible improvements. Teachers routinely correct grammatical errors. Assessment is monitored well and learners and their parents are aware of the progress they make. Assignments are interesting and vocationally relevant. However, the text is not clearly written in some of them.
- The provision satisfactorily meets the needs of learners. However, the intermediate performing arts course is not running in the current year, so reducing progression routes for learners. Enrichment activities enhance the learners' experience well. Managers make best use of the available budget by bringing an increasing number of professionals in to the college to enhance learners' experiences and learning.
- Guidance and support are good. Managers have improved initial advice and guidance and induction activities to ensure that learners and their parents are aware of the demands of the course. Learning support sessions are highly effective in raising the success of learners. Teaching assistants support learners very well. Individual learning plans and the arrangements for identifying and supporting those at risk of leaving early are highly effective.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a very clear vision and strategy for improvement that staff understand and support. Team morale is high. A wide range of improvements is having an impact on selection, induction, course retention, attendance and learners' behaviour. However, these actions have not yet increased success rates sufficiently.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners celebrate diversity through a range of well designed projects. Dance learners gain an understanding of dance from different cultures through Bhangra and African dance workshops. Music learners work with others who are blind and partially sighted while performance learners work with those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Both groups produce work of a high standard.
- Self-assessment is accurate and inclusive. Course reviews use data effectively to inform planning. Action plans are clear and precise. However, actions identified have had insufficient impact on outcomes for learners.

### **What does Hereford College of Arts need to do to improve further?**

- Improve success and retention rates further, especially for adult and music learners, through careful selection, induction and monitoring of performance, to ensure that learners successfully complete their course of study.
- Develop and share good practice in teaching and learning to ensure that learners are better equipped to achieve their potential, attain high grades and progress either to higher education or to employment in the creative sector.
- Improve all learners' literacy skills by fully implementing opportunities for them to study and achieve functional skills awards.

- Increase progression pathways for learners, particularly at intermediate level, to meet their needs and aspirations.

## Visual arts

## Grade 3

### Context

29. Currently there are 276 students enrolled on visual arts courses. The college offers the level two diploma in art and design, the extended diploma in art and design and the foundation diploma in art and design. The majority of learners are aged 16-18, from a White British background and study full-time at advanced level. A range of enrichment opportunities is available.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates are high on the foundation diploma art and design course. Success rates at level 2 have improved to around the national rate and at level 3 are above the national rate. The proportion of learners achieving high grades is low.
- The standard of learners' work is high. Foundation diploma portfolios are of a high quality and learners discuss theoretical concepts critically and appropriately. Level 3 learners develop practical vocational skills and evaluate their work with increasing accuracy. However, first year learners have yet to develop personalised experimental research in sketchbooks and their evaluative skills are not sufficiently encouraged.
- Learners make satisfactory progress in lessons. Learners set daily targets to plan their studio time and activities effectively. Teachers monitor the plans closely. However, often there is a lack of detailed planning to produce more ambitious work at the appropriate level. Learners attend well and enjoy their lessons.
- Learners feel safe and arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory. Health and safety has a high priority among staff and learners who share high expectations of safe working practices. Housekeeping in workshops is meticulous.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the more effective lessons students produce highly individual work that they evaluate constructively. However, the less effective lessons are too teacher led with insufficient challenge to inspire learners. Assessment feedback provides clear written guidance for improvement. However, grading is often overgenerous.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Improved initial assessment this year has helped the college to identify and meet learners' individual support needs well. All learners who received support were successful. Learners value the opportunity to reflect on their performance and attendance, update their individual learning plans and set new targets during tutorials.
- Good specialist resources are used well to support learning and develop learners' vocational skills. Dedicated work spaces provide a professional studio environment to display work in progress. Learners make good use of the excellent specialist workshops which include woodwork, small-scale metalwork,

ceramics, printmaking and textiles. Access to these workshops encourages learners' independence.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new managers have significantly raised staff morale and fostered a shared commitment to improvement. Staff have a clear understanding of what needs to improve. However, the new strategies in place have yet to have a significant impact on raising success rates and improving teaching and learning.
- The self-assessment report is reflective and largely accurate. Course self-assessment reports are self-critical and actions focus on tackling the recognised underperformance. However, not all areas for improvement are identified.
- New arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are fit for purpose. Good teaching and learning practice is shared informally in staff teams and is beginning to be shared across curriculum areas. However, not all good practice is shared. Staff development has taken place but there has yet to be a significant improvement in the learning experience for all learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The selection of learning texts, thematic materials and visual stimuli are taken from diverse cultural contexts. External projects with national bodies effectively raise awareness of global political issues of war, poverty and child labour.

#### **What does Hereford College of Arts need to do to improve further?**

- Improve retention, success rates and the achievement of high grades further by careful monitoring of learners' attendance and progress, and challenging and inspiring learners to achieve their full potential.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by sharing good practice, including reflective discussion and personal evaluation, across curriculum areas.

## Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the college's assistant principal 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.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from courses across the subject areas the college offers.



**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Hereford College of Arts**  
**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>			
Full-time learners	375	322	53
Part-time learners	21	1	20
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
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>	3		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2		
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
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?	2		
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	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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