

# Gateshead College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 108458

**Name of lead inspector:** Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

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

**Address:** Baltic Campus  
Quarryfield Road  
Gateshead  
Tyne and Wear  
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**Telephone number:** 0191 4900300

## Information about the provider

1. Gateshead College is a large general further education college. The college's main site is a purpose-built campus in the Gateshead Quays. The college also has a specialist sports academy based at Gateshead International Stadium and two purpose-built skills academies based on the Team Valley. One of these hosts automotive, engineering, manufacturing and logistics, and the other is a specialist construction centre. Within a 15 mile radius of the college there are seven general further education colleges and four universities. Ten of the 12 local schools and academies have sixth form provision.
2. During 2010/11, the college had 8,060 enrolments. Of the 5,511 learners on full-time courses, around 2,515 were aged 16 to 18. Adults make up the significant proportion of part-time learners. In 2010/11, approximately 8% of the college's learners came from minority ethnic groups, which is higher than the local population. Around 46% of learners studied at advanced level in 2010/11, and nearly a quarter studied at intermediate level. Programmes are offered in all subject areas apart from agriculture, horticulture and animal care. In 2010/11, there were just over 2,200 apprentices. The college holds a large contract for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace (formerly Train to Gain).
3. Gateshead is ranked as the 43<sup>rd</sup> most deprived local authority in England. The unemployment rate is around 11.1%, which is slightly higher than both the regional average and the national figure. Moreover, male unemployment in Gateshead is nearly six percentage points higher than the national rate. The proportion of people qualified to degree level and above has increased in recent years to nearly 23%, which is slightly lower than the northeast average and around eight percentage points lower than the national figure. The proportion of school pupils at local level achieving five GCSEs at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is slightly higher than the national average, but the rate varies widely from school to school, from 40% to 88%.
4. Around 655 school pupils aged 14 to 16 attended courses at the college in 2010/11.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Employer Partnerships – Regional NAC (manufacturing)
  - Start Training (Blackstone) (logistics)
  - Flooring Assessments LLP (construction)
  - Construction and Plan Assessments Ltd (construction)
  - Skills NE (health and social care)
  - Teamtrain Ltd (logistics)
  - DTNE Partnership (health and social care)
  - Group Horizon (construction)

- ID Training Ltd (health)
- Cablecom Ltd (telecoms)
- Systems Training (logistics)
- Premier Training International (sport)
- Winnovation (health and social care)
- Premier Performance Training (logistics)
- Shaw Trust (health and social care)
- Phoenix Training (business administration)
- Teamtrain (logistics)
- Baltic Training (information and communication technology).

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11</b>
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to 16  Further education (16 to 18)  Foundation learning	655 part-time learners  2,515 full-time learners 937 part-time learners  141 part-time learners 466 full-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)	2,996 full-time learners 3,878 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships	6,037 learners 2,209 apprentices
<b>Adult and community learning</b>	115 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>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	3

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Health and social care:	
college-based learning	3
work-based learning	2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies:	
college-based learning	2
work-based learning	2
Information and communication technology	3
Sport and recreation	2

## Overall effectiveness

- Gateshead College has many strengths, but also has some weaknesses. Excellent and productive partnerships with employers enable the college to make outstanding provision in work-based learning and to help shape the good college curriculum. Strong collaboration with other agencies has resulted in the college attracting many groups, including unemployed young people and adults, back into education. This is a highly inclusive college where learners from all backgrounds benefit from the harmonious atmosphere that is all-pervasive. Inspectors agree with learners that the college provides an extremely safe environment. Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for supporting learners with complex personal, physical and welfare concerns are excellent. However, the proportion of learners who stay on their college-based

courses and successfully complete their qualifications has declined since the previous inspection and there is too much variation in the quality of provision across the college. Attendance at lessons is often low and, despite the college's attendance policy, goes unchecked in a few areas.

7. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but this masks wide variations across the college. New teachers and those who are deemed to be underperforming receive good support from a team of advanced practitioners. However, systems to develop and strengthen the practice of teachers who are judged by the college as satisfactory or better are less effective.
8. Arrangements for quality assurance have not been sufficiently effective to drive improvement quickly in all areas. Self-assessment makes insufficient use of data and many of the grades in the self-assessment report are not an accurate appraisal of the college's performance. However, managers have recognised weaknesses in retention and have implemented effective strategies to rectify these.

## Main findings

- Overall success rates on college-based courses were around the national average in 2010/11. However, this disguised a declining trend in success rates on long courses to an unsatisfactory level in 2010/11. Strategies implemented at the start of the current year are having a positive impact. College data indicate that more learners than in the previous year are staying on their courses and successfully completing their qualifications. Outcomes on work-based learning programmes are outstanding.
- Increasing numbers of learners produce work of a good standard. Most learners who are retained on their courses enjoy college and many make satisfactory progress. The college's strengthened attendance policy is having a positive impact in several areas. However, low attendance prevails in a few areas and this is a key factor in inhibiting the progress made by many learners. Learners on work-based learning programmes make excellent progress and work to a very high standard.
- Learners feel and are safe. They know how to keep themselves and others safe and they demonstrate safe working practices. Learners take full advantage of the many opportunities to become involved in the life of the college and the wider community. Increasing numbers of learners are playing a greater role in the way the college is run.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are planned well, with explicit learning aims that are discussed with, and understood by, learners. Teachers promote independent learning effectively and devise meaningful, enjoyable and effective activities. Less successful lessons are characterised by poor planning and insufficient attention to ensuring that activities motivate learners and meet their differing abilities. Assessment practice is good. On apprenticeship programmes, teaching, training and learning are good.

- Arrangements to improve the quality of college-based teaching and learning are insufficiently effective. A highly skilled team of advanced practitioners supports underperforming teachers effectively and helps them to improve their practice. However, the college's current system for the observation of teaching and learning does not fully evaluate or meet the development needs of teachers who are deemed satisfactory or better so that they can improve further.
- The college's approach to developing college-based learners' literacy and numeracy skills is not effective. Teachers make insufficient use of the outcomes of the initial assessment to plan learning activities that help to develop their skills. On work-based programmes, learners' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well.
- Partnerships are outstanding. Employers speak extremely highly of the college's flexibility in meeting the training needs of their employees very well and in developing apprenticeships. Labour market information is used well to provide a good range of college-based courses that offer clear progression routes in most subject areas. The college works closely with local regeneration initiatives and is highly successful in attracting young people not currently in education, employment or training, and unemployed adults, back into education.
- Support to help learners achieve their goals is good. Learners with complex needs receive excellent tailored support. Individual and group support for learners on work-based programmes are highly effective. Recruitment and induction procedures have been strengthened and this is resulting in more learners completing their courses. Learners at risk of not achieving are now identified more promptly and support is put in place swiftly.
- Governors and the principal provide a clear strategic direction based on the college's values and a clear understanding of local and national priorities. A number of new initiatives have been introduced to improve performance and help the college to achieve its ambitions, but it is only in the current year that actions to improve success rates on long courses are beginning to have a measurable impact on retention.
- Arrangements to ensure that learners are safeguarded are outstanding. The college has a very strong culture of safety, and the well-being of learners is given a high priority. Arrangements for safeguarding are clear and effective and all appropriate checks and effective monitoring take place. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment and promotes health and safety and safeguarding exceptionally well across its provision.
- Self-assessment and quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. However, the pace of improvement is inconsistent and has been slow. A key reason for this is that self-assessment, at both curriculum and college levels, does not interrogate data sufficiently well when scrutinising performance, including the performance of different groups of learners. Lack of rigour in the moderation of the judgements in the self-assessment report has resulted in the college significantly over-grading most areas of provision.

## **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that college-wide strategies to increase the number of learners who stay and complete their qualifications are implemented rigorously so that the recent improvements are sustained and strengthened further. Monitor and keep a sharp focus on those areas where improvement needs to be more rapid.
- Evaluate fully the current process for developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills and use this to inform a more coherent strategy that better equips learners for future employability. Raise attendance rates in all areas of the curriculum by ensuring a rigorous implementation of the college's attendance policy.
- Review the process to provide support to help improve teachers' performance, specifically those graded as satisfactory or better, by the college's internal observation scheme. Evaluate fully the impact the support has had on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the accuracy and rigour of self-assessment at curriculum and whole-college levels by taking much greater account of the importance of performance data. Incorporate thorough analysis of data, including the performance of different groups of learners, when making judgements. Increase the rigour of the moderation of self-assessment reports at all levels in the college.

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

### **What learners like:**

- the safe and welcoming environment
- the support and guidance from staff
- gaining extra qualifications
- regular reviews (apprentices)
- the presentation and ease of using e-portfolios (apprentices)
- the teachers and the teaching
- being treated like adults and treated equally
- the resources, including the on-line books and software.

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

- better opportunities to improve GCSE grades
- better advice about career progression
- more full days in the timetable
- more placements for part-time learners.

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

### **What employers like:**

- the flexible approach the college takes in delivering training over and above the framework requirements that helps to improve the specific skills of apprentices
- good communication between themselves and college that enables them to support apprentices fully in achieving framework qualifications
- professional and reliable assessors
- being involved in learners' progress and development.

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

- no recommendations for improvement were received from employers.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 3**

9. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant decline in success rates on long courses, but, in the current year, the actions taken to improve the provision are beginning to demonstrate a positive impact. Leaders and managers have implemented a number of well-considered initiatives, including revised arrangements for recruitment and induction, closer monitoring of learners' progress and a revised curriculum management structure. The result is that retention is markedly improved in the current year. The college continues to expand and develop its curriculum well to meet the needs of more learners in the community. Work with partners and other agencies continues to be outstanding. Processes for self-assessment and quality improvement have not proved effective in maintaining the high standards identified at the previous inspection. Access to data to monitor performance is now good. The use of the data to evaluate performance has been weak, but is improving. The college has suitable staff and physical resources to carry through its plans for improvement. its work-based learning provision is outstanding. Financial health is sound and the management of accommodation and resources is excellent.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

10. The overall success rate for college-based courses has improved steadily to around average levels for similar colleges in 2010/11. The high proportion of learners on short courses achieve satisfactorily. However, the proportion of learners who completed their long qualifications has declined over the three years since the previous inspection and is low. A significant number of learners aged 16 to 18 do not complete their qualifications successfully, particularly on advanced vocational provision. Success rates for adults improved to a satisfactory level on foundation courses in 2010/11, but declined, and are low, at intermediate level. Adult achievement is poor on advanced vocational courses.
11. Success rates vary significantly across subject areas and courses. Success rates in eight subject areas improved in 2010/11, but, despite this, rates remain unsatisfactory in many subjects. In 2010/11, in AS- and A-level subjects, there was a notable improvement in success rates, although this masks a wide variation in performance between learners of different ages and across the range of subjects. For example, learners in science subjects do well, but those in others, such as history and geography, underachieve. Results in functional skills are weak for the small cohort of college-based learners taking these qualifications. The proportion of learners gaining high grades in GCSE English is well above average levels. In GCSE mathematics, high-grade achievement is low.

12. The likelihood of current college-based learners being successful is much higher. The college looked carefully into the reasons why learners were leaving early and implemented a range of strategies. As a result college data indicate that retention rates are markedly higher than at a similar point in the previous year. Already a reasonable proportion of learners have secured accredited qualifications and the signs are that a good many more learners than in previous years are about to complete their qualifications successfully. The current cohort of learners are making progress that is at least in line with that predicted by their prior attainment. Learners' practical skills are well developed in vocational areas and increasing numbers of them produce work of a good standard.
13. Adults who received additional learning support in 2010/11 performed better than any other group who did not. However, there is no difference in the performance of learners aged 16 to 18 in 2010/11 who received additional learning support and those who did not. The numbers of learners from minority ethnic groups are too small to enable a reliable analysis of their performance compared with other groups.
14. Outcomes for work-based learning are outstanding. The overall success rates and completion within planned timescales across all intermediate and advanced apprenticeship have been consistently good or better and above national averages for at least the last four years. The completion within the planned time for NVQs in the workplace shows a similar trend. There are no significant variations in the performance of any different cohorts of learners, with all performing well against comparative national averages.
15. Those learners who stay on their courses enjoy college life. They work well with their teachers and peers. A high proportion move onto higher-level courses. Many learners enhance their employability successfully through gaining additional qualifications valued by employers. However, the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is weak and the proportion of learners on college-based courses taking and achieving functional skills is too low. Apprentices and learners taking NVQs in the workplace develop very good literacy and numeracy skills. Although punctuality is generally good, attendance is low on many college-based programmes.
16. Learners feel and are safe in the college and in their working environments. They use working practices that keep themselves and others safe, especially when using tools and equipment in workshops. Thorough checks are carried out on employers' health and safety and they are supported well to improve to the standard required. Health and safety training for staff and learners is extensive. All learners know to whom they should report concerns.
17. Health and well-being are promoted effectively across all college sites. The proportion of learners participating in sexual health events, such as chlamydia screening, is high. Learners make a good contribution to the college and wider community through extensive fundraising, drama productions and projects to promote sustainability in the environment. Increasingly learners are asked to

play a greater role in the way their college is run, and they respond very enthusiastically to this.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 3

18. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The best lessons are planned well, with explicit learning aims that are discussed with, and understood by, learners. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods designed to encourage independent learning and are successful in engaging learners in meaningful, enjoyable and effective learning activities. Information and learning technology (ILT) is used well and at appropriate times, to add value and interest to the learning activities. In contrast, less successful lessons are characterised by poor planning by the teacher and insufficient attention to ensure that activities motivate and meet the differing abilities of all learners.
19. Assessment practice for college-based courses is good and learners receive detailed and helpful feedback to help them improve. Assessment practice in the workplace is strong. Assessors ensure that assessment arrangements suit the working patterns of employees. Feedback is thorough and constructive.
20. The college has invested energy and resources to extend teachers' skills and knowledge. Highly effective training is given to teachers who are new to the college. A wide range of on-line training and examples of good practice in teaching and learning are supported and enhanced by an annual programme of staff development. Recent and frequently repeated training on promoting equality and diversity in lessons has yet to impact on developing learners' understanding in lessons. Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently effective. A highly skilled team of advanced practitioners support underperforming teachers effectively to help them improve. However, the identified development needs of teachers who are deemed satisfactory or better is managed at curriculum level and no formal evaluation is collated centrally to identify the impact of support or training and whether this has led to improvements in teaching. Consequently, the college does not have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Curriculum performance data are not interrogated alongside the outcomes of observations and this means that support is often not targeted where it is needed most. Inspectors' graded lesson observations did not reflect the college's profile of a high proportion of good or better teaching grades.
21. Relationships between teachers and learners are productive and respectful. An effective induction programme develops and accredits learners' positive attitudes, social and study skills, and increasingly helps prepare them well for studying. The college's approach to developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills is insufficient. Learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills are assessed at enrolment. However, the development of these skills within the curriculum is weak.

22. On apprenticeship programmes, teaching, training and assessment are good. Levels of learners' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed at the beginning of their programme and a good proportion of learners who are already operating at the key skill level required by the apprenticeship programme take a higher level key skills qualification. Where learners' specific literacy or numeracy development needs are identified, staff are very responsive in providing effective and timely tuition to help them improve.
23. The curriculum meets the needs and interests of most learners well. Clear progression routes are available in nearly all areas of provision. A good range of apprenticeships is available for learners preferring a work-based route. Local labour market information is used shrewdly by staff to inform future curriculum plans. Data provided during inspection show that progression between levels of study and into employment is good as is progression to higher education. Many learners benefit from a very good range of short qualifications that enhance their skills and expertise effectively. Opportunities for learners to participate in a wide range of enrichment activities are good across all main college sites. A particular strength of the college is learners' participation in the wide range of successful competitive sports teams.
24. Outstanding partnership working brings significant benefit to learners. The college's very strong and collaborative partners include local, regional and international companies. Their close involvement in developing provision is instrumental in ensuring that both college and work-based courses are tailored to meet the changing skills' needs as the region's industrial base changes. A particularly impressive feature of the college's partnership working is the development of provision to meet the needs of the developing sustainable and renewable technology and low-carbon industries. The college is recognised for its success in attracting young people who are currently not in education, employment or training, and adults, back into education. Links with schools are good and well established.
25. The care, guidance and support learners receive are good. Learners with complex physical and/or mental health issues receive excellent tailored support, often provided through partnerships with other agencies. Staff have further developed their excellent skills to respond to changes in learners' needs, for example, recruiting a mental health specialist and receiving training in self-harm. One-to-one and group support for learners on work-based programmes are highly individualised and include the provision of signers for hearing-impaired learners. On college-based programmes, learning support assistants help learners effectively within the classroom in a few areas, including engineering and sport and recreation, but they are not effectively deployed in others. Laptops are issued to learners to help them study at home. Good use is made of financial support to help learners who would otherwise leave their programme.
26. As part of its strategy to improve retention, the college has strengthened information, advice and guidance to ensure that learners are on the right programme. Revised induction procedures help learners settle quickly onto their

programmes. Learners at risk of not completing their programme are now identified and monitored closely. Recently appointed retention coordinators provide a range of interventions to help learners continue with their programmes. Systems are in place to monitor and respond to absence, but attendance is still low in a few remaining areas.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 3

27. The principal and governors provide clear strategic leadership and direction. Planning is based on a clear and up-to-date focus on national and local priorities which are widely understood by staff. The revised management structure is designed to strengthen performance management and staff accountability. While there are signs of improvement, it is too early to measure its full impact. Following a significant decline over several years, particularly in success rates on long courses, it is only in the current year that the interventions to improve performance can be seen to be having a positive impact. Leadership and management of work-based learning are outstanding. High aspirations have led to very effective and consistently successful provision.
28. Governors understand the challenges faced by the college in its economic and social environment and focus clearly on the needs of employers and the local community. They possess a good range of experience and expertise which they use well to monitor the performance of the college. They have challenged college managers to improve retention and success rates where they are low. Committee work is thorough. Student governors are supported and encouraged to give their views. Governors carry out their statutory duties in respect of safeguarding, health and safety, and equality and diversity.
29. The college's promotion of safeguarding is outstanding. Policies and procedures are very comprehensive, clearly understood and are followed closely by staff. Thorough checks are made on the suitability of employed staff, volunteers, governors and subcontractors to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Highly effective individual support plans are developed for learners with safeguarding needs to ensure their safety and the safety of other learners. The college has very effective health and safety policies and procedures based on risk assessments that are updated regularly. Governors receive regular reports about safeguarding, accidents and near misses. Very thorough action is taken to address near misses. Excellent training is provided, for example, through simulation events involving police and public service learners responding to a simulated terrorist attack in the college. Staff are well qualified. All sites have CCTV and this is monitored centrally. Where safeguarding issues have arisen, the college has taken swift action and involved other appropriate agencies.
30. The college is an inclusive community based on expressed values of tolerance and respect. The college deals swiftly and appropriately with any complaints by learners about bullying and harassment and reinforces its code of student conduct regularly. It has recently developed a 'fitness to study' procedure to ensure that, where there are concerns regarding mental health or well-being, learners are supported sensitively and appropriately. It is working with

- Stonewall to ensure that the college is safe and supportive for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and learners. The college's involvement in a wide range of initiatives draws in many who might not otherwise participate in education and training. The recently established Gateshead College Foundation charity supports a diverse range of learners to attend the college. The college has taken successful actions to widen participation, but it does not use data sufficiently to identify differences in performance between groups or to measure the impact of actions taken. Equality and diversity are promoted inconsistently at curriculum level.
31. The college is good at gathering and responding to learners' views. Learners have a number of opportunities to give their views through surveys, course representatives and informally with their teachers and tutors. Student representation is strong on the governing body, but meetings of the learners' parliament are poorly attended and course representation is not consistent across the college. The college has recently appointed a sabbatical president to reinvigorate and strengthen the learner voice. The college is also working to enable learners with disabilities to express their views more forcefully through a 'Your Voice Counts' event. Learners are highly satisfied with their experiences in the college and feel that their views are listened to and responded to effectively. The views of employers and partners are used effectively to develop and improve provision. This is a real strength in the college's work-based learning provision, involving employers closely in all aspects of their work, including in the design of the curriculum.
  32. Arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory. Self-assessment and improvement planning processes are comprehensive, but, until recently, they have not been effective in securing improvements at a fast enough pace. Neither the course self-assessment reports nor the curriculum area reports have provided a sufficiently rigorous analysis of learners' outcomes. They have not recognised the significance of, or given sufficient weight to, success rate trends or benchmarking data in their judgements and grading. The whole college self-assessment report, consequently, is inaccurate and provides an over-optimistic view of performance. However, quality improvement plans have shown awareness of where improvements are needed, and, for example, A levels have improved. The work-based learning self-assessment report is an example of good practice, analysing data very effectively to inform detailed target setting. Good developments in the way that management information is provided are helping to sharpen the monitoring of performance this year. Retention and achievement are both showing signs of marked improvement compared with a similar point in the previous year.
  33. Strong financial performance has enabled the college to invest in accommodation and resources, many of which are of industry standard and which help to provide an excellent environment for learners. The college is paying attention to sustainable development in its building plans and makes use of wind and solar energy where it can. Given the outstanding work-based learning provision, the high quality facilities and resources for learning and the

significant improvements in retention and associated achievements in the current year, the college now provides good value for money.

## Subject areas

### Health and social care: college-based learning

Grade 3

#### Context

34. Full and part-time courses are offered in health and social care. Courses are available from foundation through to advanced level and to foundation degree. Currently just over 200 learners aged 16 to 18 and 220 adults study on full-time courses. Around 311 learners aged 16 to 18 and 620 adults take part-time courses.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on advanced-level courses have been consistently high, but dipped to below average in 2010/11. Success rates are satisfactory at intermediate level. Success rates on the access to higher education programme remain high. Current learners are making satisfactory progress to achieve their intended learning goals and more are staying to complete their courses than previously. Attendance is low.
- Learners' written work is of a satisfactory standard. Assessment is planned well and learners receive prompt and appropriate feedback. Learners have good access to work experience and placements in a variety of health and care settings. A significant number of learners have been able to secure paid employment in care settings as a result of their placement experience and development of their practical skills.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, learners are stretched through a variety of stimulating activities. For example, in a foundation-level lesson, learners were given 'the power' to nominate each other when recapping learning; this enabled all learners to participate and build confidence in their knowledge and understanding. In other sessions, teachers use a narrow range of activities and learners are left to work unproductively for too long.
- Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. Classrooms are comfortable and well equipped, with interactive whiteboards which many, but not all, teachers use to good effect. In the better lessons, both staff and learners use ILT effectively, but this is not always the case.
- Links between theory and practice are not always made well. Many teachers encourage learners to reflect upon the learning experiences gained during their practical work placements to illustrate successful activities, issues and care dilemmas. However, this practice is not widespread; sometimes this is because a small number of teachers are not vocational specialists.
- The range of provision is satisfactory. Courses in health and social care are available from foundation through to foundation degree. Many learners progress through all the levels. Adult learners are able to study the access to higher



education course to enable them to achieve career aspirations and improve their chances of securing work. Full-time learners currently have a satisfactory choice of additional qualifications to help broaden and develop their skills. Opportunities for learners to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are insufficient.

- Partnerships with schools, employers and community groups are satisfactory. Links are in place to ensure availability of good practical work placements. However, the department is aware that more needs to be done to involve the industry in the design, planning and delivery of the curriculum.
- Pastoral support for learners is good. Staff use the college's electronic data system to monitor learners' progress and agree and set realistic targets. Learners at risk are now identified more promptly and course tutors work with support staff to rectify issues that get in the way of learning. Learners speak highly of the support they receive. Bursaries and bus passes are available for learners in need of financial support and from September 2011 learners have been issued with laptops to assist with their studies.
- Self-assessment lacks rigour and is insufficiently self-critical. There has been slow implementation of strategies to improve retention, although this is improving in the current year. However, issues in the timetable structure, for example, long gaps between classes, inhibit the amount of progress a few learners make and have an overall negative impact on learners' experiences.

### **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Maintain the focus on the need to improve success rates, particularly through increasing retention. Raise attendance through a consistent expectation by all staff that all learners must attend lessons.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching and learning by ensuring that class activities provide sufficient challenge and stretch learners. Develop teachers' skills to enable them to use ILT more effectively to enhance and make learning interesting.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment. Make sure that areas for improvement are identified clearly and action plans are monitored routinely.
- Review the organisation of the curriculum to ensure that timetables support effective teaching and learning. Provide learners with access to vocationally experienced practitioners who can provide more opportunities for learners to link theoretical learning with current practice.

## Health and social care: work-based learning

## Grade 2

### Context

35. At the time of the inspection, 213 learners were taking NVQs in the workplace at intermediate or advanced levels in health and social care. An apprenticeship programme was introduced at the start of 2010/11. Currently, around 100 learners are following apprenticeships at intermediate or advanced levels. Around three quarters of learners across work-based programmes are female.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for work-based learners are good. Overall success rates in 2010/11 are high. Completion rates within the planned time declined to a satisfactory level in the previous two years, but are much improved and above the national average in 2010/11. Success rates for the first cohort of intermediate apprentices are good. Most current learners make at least good progress on their programmes.
- All learners are highly motivated and enjoy their learning. Learners understand clearly what they need to do to progress and how to improve. They develop effective skills and increase their understanding of how to raise the standards of care for the people they look after. Learners display good commitment and attitude to their learning, developing very good personal skills and gaining increased confidence.
- Learners value highly the opportunity to take additional qualifications. Learning about dementia care for one learner has ensured that she is more responsible and can provide high standards of care for her client. Learners and employers also value the additional medication programme offered through a distance-learning programme. All learners feel safe, secure and appreciate the support they are given by both assessors and employers.
- Assessment practice and monitoring of learners' progress are good and result in high rates of completion within planned timescales. Staff are highly skilled, experienced professionals who are able to contextualise learning and tease out further understanding by providing relevant scenarios, such as, 'tell me what' and 'how would you respond to' scenarios. Overall, good coaching is used to develop learners' skills of independent thinking.
- The needs and interests of both learners and employers are met effectively. Learners are given a choice of units that match their interest and skill development. The relationships with employers are outstanding. Assessors make their expectations of employers clear and this enables employers to support learners fully in their learning. Employers state, and inspectors agree, that the college takes the time to understand fully the needs of their employees and responds to these very well.
- The care, guidance and support learners receive are outstanding. Learners feel highly supported while on programme. For example, they know who to contact if there are any issues or questions and have a range of ways in which to do

this, such as by email and text messaging. This in turn keeps them on track and motivated to achieve. Learners are assessed at times that are both convenient to them and to their employers, and this includes evenings.

- Staff are managed and coordinated particularly well. Managers have high expectations and the staff respond very positively. For example, staff state that they feel re-energised and are, 'being pushed out of their comfort zone'. Staff state that they feel fully supported by managers and team leaders. The team is clear about their role in enhancing learning; meeting the needs of the clients and learners is the main priority.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are very strong and meet the very high expectations of the sector. A strategic decision to recruit only assessors with considerable management experience in health and social care ensures a high prioritisation of safeguarding for learners. Safeguarding is a key component of staff induction and learner review and assessment.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is strong. A culture of mutual respect and understanding is clearly evident in both staff and learners' attitudes and behaviour. Staff training in equality and diversity is an integral part of monthly team meetings, with additional training to meet specific aspects such as dyslexia and dementia. Learners show a high level of understanding of equality and diversity and can readily use examples from their workplaces during discussions with assessors. Data analysis of different groups is not yet fully established.
- Quality assurance is good and very effective in leading to improvements. All aspects of the learners' experience and every programme are evaluated rigorously. The paperwork, however, is overly focused on the role of the assessor rather than the impact on the learner. Performance of learners and staff is monitored closely.

### **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that all aspects of quality assurance focus closely on how the area's work impacts on the learner. When evaluating performance, incorporate a detailed data analysis of the outcomes of different groups of learners and use this to inform actions for improvement.

## Engineering and manufacturing technologies: college-based learning

Grade 2

### Context

36. Courses are offered in automotive body repair and paint, motor vehicle maintenance and repair, and engineering craft and technician work. Many of these courses are available from entry through to advanced and degree levels. At the time of the inspection, 294 full-time and 1,145 part-time learners were taking college-based programmes. Few learners are female. A low proportion of learners come from minority-ethnic groups.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on long courses have been above the national average in 2009/10 and 2010/11. For learners aged 16 to 18, the success rate has been satisfactory and, for adults, it has been high. The success rate at intermediate level is consistently high. Across individual courses, the success rates are variable. Retention in the current year is much improved and more consistent across all programmes.
- Learners develop their practical skills effectively and maintain high standards. They work efficiently in the workshops and make good progress. They work safely and receive good support from the teachers, who are vocationally competent and experienced. In an advanced lesson in vehicle body repair, for example, learners worked diligently, showing good facility with tools and equipment, and produced work of high quality.
- Teaching and learning are good, especially in practical lessons. In workshops, learners benefit from excellent resources and spacious accommodation to support the curriculum. These are used well to provide learners with a good range of workshop activities. In a few areas, such as mechanical principles, resources are underdeveloped.
- The quality of theory teaching is more variable. There is good use of ILT in a few lessons, where weblinks are used well to show appropriate video clips of engineering operations and learning is reinforced by probing questioning. Practical activity within theory lessons is also used to good effect and learning and wider skills are reinforced by requiring learners to make presentations of their work.
- A few theory lessons also displayed weaknesses such as the slow pace of learning, underdeveloped assessment of learning, too much use of electronic presentations and ineffectively managed group work. Much of the theory or practical work does not develop literacy, research and report writing sufficiently well.
- Assessment is managed well. Assignments are spread through the year and deadlines are clear to learners. Assignment briefs are clear, as are grading

criteria. Marked work is returned promptly, but teachers' annotation of it is not always helpful enough to enable learners to improve.

- The monitoring of learners' progress has improved this year. It is now very effective. Revised college data systems enable teachers and managers to monitor the progress of learners closely, identify those at risk and put in place relevant support where needed.
- Progress reviews with individual learners are held appropriately frequently. Tutors benefit from a new college system that collates reports from each teacher. The short-term learning targets set by teachers are not always useful enough to help learners improve.
- The range of provision offers good opportunities for progression from entry level to advanced level and beyond. There are particularly strong links with Nissan and the curriculum area is very responsive to their requirements. This relationship has a very positive impact on the quality of resources and the expertise of teachers.
- Learners receive good individual support. They speak positively about the informal support provided by teachers both inside and outside formal lessons. They also benefit from good support from learning support assistants who provide individual support within lessons and whenever else they require it.
- Curriculum management is good. Realistic targets are set and used to improve performance. Management information is accurate and readily available. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily, but the approach to how this is done in the teaching is not systematic enough. Female learners and staff are used well to promote recruitment of female learners, but this has yet to have more impact. Learners' views are collected in appropriate ways and these views inform improvement.
- The quality of provision is reported on in self-assessment reports at course, and curriculum area, levels. These are detailed and contain much analysis and comment. However, they do not evaluate key aspects of provision such as the quality of teaching and learning sufficiently rigorously and contain an overly positive view of the quality of outcomes. The implementation of quality improvement plans at curriculum area level is not monitored rigorously enough.

### **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Develop the quality of the teaching of theory by providing focused support on the management of group work and assessment for learning and enhance the quality and range of equipment to support the teaching of mechanical principles.
- Improve the usefulness of the short-term learning targets set to inform progress reviews by providing training and discussion about best practice among teachers and tutors.
- Adopt a more consistent approach to the development of literacy, research and report-writing skills, and the promotion of equality and diversity, by ensuring

that schemes of work identify which lessons lend themselves readily to these requirements and then ensure that these lessons provide them.

- Increase the rigour of self-assessment by analysing learners' outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning more thoroughly and ensure the more systematic monitoring of quality improvement plans.

## Engineering and manufacturing technologies: work-based learning

Grade 2

### Context

37. The college offers engineering apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced levels for 676 learners, of which just under 2% are female and around 2% are of minority ethnic heritage. Currently around 622 learners follow NVQs at intermediate level in the workplace.

### Key findings

- Outcomes are good. In 2010/11, the overall success rate for apprentices was high and very high for advanced apprentices. Completion within the planned timescale for all apprentices was consistently high. The success rate for NVQs in the workplace is just above the average level. Completion within the planned time has improved and is now good.
- Apprentices' attendance at both college and the workplace is good and learners make good progress in completing their qualifications. Progress reviews are regular and, on most occasions, employers are present when the review takes place. Previous targets are reviewed fully and realistic short-term targets are set. Progression from level 2 to level 3 apprenticeships is very high.
- Development of learners' skills is good. Skills displayed by learners in the workplace, operating heavy lifting equipment, rectifying faults in vehicle body pressing dies and servicing emergency response vehicles, demonstrate that learners are working responsibly, independently and to industry standards. Learners have good opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge, exceeding the requirements of their main qualification, through a range of short courses.
- Learners feel safe both in college and the workplace. They demonstrate an outstanding knowledge of health and safety in the workplace. Safeguarding information is given priority during induction and is reinforced in reviews. Good security arrangements are in place at all the college sites and workplaces visited during the inspection.
- Individual coaching and promotion of learning are good. Teaching is good and attendance is high at most sessions. Learners' needs are identified clearly and effectively supported by assessors during progress reviews. Learners' files contain a good range of reference materials related to their occupational areas which they put to good use in practical sessions.
- The range of provision is outstanding and meets the needs of learners and employers. The college has strong links with employers who are complimentary about the support given to their apprentices. Employers are offered a good range of qualification pathways to meet their needs.
- Partnership working is outstanding. The college works collaboratively with partners to deliver programmes at, for example, Nissan UK. The impact of the

partnership is that learners have access to an excellent range of resources which enable them to develop high-level occupational skills. The promotion of the importance of professional body membership is not yet embedded fully in learners' programmes.

- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Monitoring of learners' progress is close and frequent and often conducted with the involvement of the employer. Feedback on college-based assessments gives learners clear guidance on how to improve their grades. Underperformance issues with learners are dealt with robustly and helpfully by college tutors.
- Leadership and management are good. Systems for self-assessment are thorough. Quality improvement plans identify accurately where appropriate actions are required, although staff are not always clear about their role in the implementation of these. Resources for engineering learners are very good in the workplace and college sites visited during the inspection.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is covered fully in learner review sessions. Most learners demonstrate a sound understanding of matters relating to equality and diversity. Apprentices, workplace colleagues and employers are respectful of each other.

#### **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their role in the implementation of quality improvement action plans.



## Information and communication technology

## Grade 3

### Context

38. Full-and part-time courses are offered from entry to advanced level for practitioners and users. Of the 618 learners, just over a half are aged 16 to 18. Approximately 41% of all learners study part-time. Around one quarter of learners are female.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. This masks a wide variation in performance across programmes and ages. Success rates on several intermediate courses including the certificate in IT User Skills are high, as are rates on AS- and A-level information and communication technology (ICT) courses. Success rates on a few other programmes have declined and are low. Performance in the foundation award in IT User Skills declined in 2010/11 and is very low.
- Learners aged 16 to 18 perform at a satisfactory level. Adults' performance in 2010/11 was low. Many courses now being offered are new and therefore it is difficult to identify any trends. However, of the courses that have run for two years or more, approximately 64% of the provision performs above national benchmarks.
- A small number of learners have already completed their studies within the current academic year and college data indicate that more learners are staying to complete their qualifications than at a similar point in the previous year. Attendance in classes observed was low. The department is aware of general attendance issues and is taking action to improve this.
- Learners develop good employability skills by using specialist software and hardware. The college's specialist software is freely and legally available to learners, to encourage them to continue their studies at home or elsewhere. Course projects are devised with 'real work' scenarios, to better prepare learners for commercial standards and to equip them with work-ready skills. Learners' academic targets are set and monitored routinely. However, other targets, such as career aims and personal skills are not recorded or monitored effectively in electronic individual learner plans.
- Learners feel safe. Learners are aware how to be safe when using ICT equipment. They keep drinks away from computers, maintain good posture throughout lessons and are confident that they are able to raise concerns with staff. Learners value the awareness-raising sessions about eBullying, 'sexting' and identity fraud.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are well structured and most move at a quick pace. Learners develop their IT skills well and many make at least satisfactory progress within lessons. Staff are experienced and

demonstrate good awareness of developments within ICT. Current news, software and technological knowledge are shared frequently with learners.

- In the less successful lessons, a lack of planning to meet the needs of the more-able learners results in them not being fully challenged. All classrooms contain fit-for-purpose computers, software and hardware for the benefit of the learners. Interactive whiteboards are installed in each classroom, but these are not used to good effect in all lessons.
- There is a good range of provision, from entry level through to advanced level, with clear progression routes to higher levels. Partners and employers are involved routinely in curriculum design and changes to the programme, and provide very useful training and updating for staff. Employers are highly committed to the work of the department and offer work experience in return for the college's high level of response to meeting their training needs.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All learners demonstrate skills of effective teamwork and show respect to other learners and staff. Equality and diversity topics are promoted satisfactorily within the curriculum and group tutorials when the opportunity arises. However, data are not analysed systematically to identify the performance of different groups in order to take appropriate action to close achievement gaps.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory. Staff are involved in self-assessment and understand its value. However, the report does not identify sufficiently accurately the weaknesses in the area. For example, it does not give enough weight to the areas for improvement in teaching and learning. The use of data to analyse performance is insufficient. Many of the grades awarded in the subject area self-assessment report were generous.

### **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Analyse carefully the reasons why learners leave their courses early and implement actions to rectify this in order to halt the decline in success rates on a few courses, particularly the award in IT User Skills. Ensure that all staff set high expectations that learners must attend all lessons and implement rigorously the college's attendance policy.
- Identify the characteristics of the best lessons and share this with all staff in order to improve the consistency of teaching and learning in the department.
- Be more rigorous in evaluating performance in the area. Analyse data thoroughly, including the outcomes of different groups of learners and use this to identify accurately where performance is strong and where it needs to improve in order to inform action planning.

## Sport and recreation

## Grade 2

### Context

39. Full-time academic and vocational courses are offered from intermediate to advanced level. Nearly all of the current 388 learners study at advanced level. The college offers a significant number of short courses in sports coaching, health and fitness and sports officiating.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on AS- and A-level courses are high. Success rates on vocational courses at intermediate and advanced levels have been below national averages for three years. Although too many learners leave before completing their courses, a significant proportion of those who complete achieve high grades. Retention rates have improved markedly in the current year. Significant numbers of learners are making at least good progress towards the achievement of their qualification. On short courses, success rates are consistently high.
- Learners develop very high levels of practical skills, knowledge and understanding that they apply both to participation in sport and as sports coaches. Many learners gain professional contracts, for example, to play rugby, football, cricket and basketball, and a high proportion of learners progress to university. Learners improve their group management skills, self-esteem, communication and personal organisational skills.
- Learners feel safe. Risk assessments carried out by staff and learners are rigorous and very well enforced. Good emphasis is placed upon ensuring safe practice and reducing the risk of injury when playing sport. Learners make a very important contribution to the community by helping to organise local sporting events and participating in sports teams.
- Lessons and coaching sessions are planned well. Good links are made between theory work and practical application in identifying the components of fitness training programmes and implementing them in individualised programmes. Learners are generally well engaged in lessons and tutors make good and regular checks of knowledge and understanding. More demanding tasks maintain motivation and interest and learners develop their skills at a good pace. Learning support assistants are used well to support learners with their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Resources to support learning are outstanding. Sports facilities are modern and built to national standards, and classrooms are spacious. This, and the access to high quality coaches, impact very positively on learners' motivation, with many learners achieving outstanding levels of success in competitions. Good use is made of ILT and learners benefit from the provision of laptops which are loaned by the college.

- Tutors and peers give learners constructive and timely feedback on their practical and theory assignments. Learners' progress is now reviewed more frequently through individual tutorials that identify what they have achieved and what still needs to be completed. Learners at risk of not achieving are identified quickly and effective additional support is provided to keep them on their programme.
- The range of provision is satisfactory. Long-course provision is offered mainly at advanced level. There are a few courses at intermediate level, but no provision at foundation level. However, there is a strong emphasis on equipping learners with several industry-specific qualifications and these enhance significantly their employment prospects.
- Excellent links with a range of partners, including schools, the local authority, professional sports clubs, employers, national governing bodies of sport, the English Institute for Sport and a range of community groups enhance the experience of learners and contribute to the excellent strategic approach to sports development in the local community.
- Induction, initial assessment and reviews of learners' progress have improved and are now effective, ensuring that learners' specific support needs are identified and met promptly. Good individual support helps learners with course or personal difficulties to remain on the programme. Learners benefit from access to physiotherapy, sports science, nutrition and psychology support.
- Management of the sport and recreation programmes has improved and now places more emphasis on the need to improve retention on long courses. Staff are well managed and supported. Good training and development opportunities further enhance the competence of staff. Communications are very effective, both internally and with external partners, to ensure that the provision is well coordinated.
- Processes to gather and use learners' and stakeholders' feedback are well established and have influenced the curriculum review, timetabling of activities and the strategies to meet the needs of learners who require specific support. The self-assessment process has given insufficient weight to the impact of course performance data in evaluating the overall quality of provision.

### **What does Gateshead College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the rigour of self-assessment. Ensure that course performance data are analysed thoroughly to help inform where the department needs to improve. Ensure sufficient weight is given to learners' outcomes when evaluating performance.
- Maintain the close monitoring of learners' progress and analyse fully why learners do not stay and complete their qualifications. Use this to inform actions and strategies that improve retention still further.
- Review the existing curriculum to meet the needs of foundation- and intermediate-level learners more effectively.

## Information about the inspection

40. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's vice 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 and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
41. 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)**

**Gateshead 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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>				
Full-time learners	6301	2961	3340	2270
Part-time learners	11708	1269	5023	2681
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	3			
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</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>	2			
<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>	<b>1</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?	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			
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>			
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
<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?	1			
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?	2			
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?	2			

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