

West Nottinghamshire College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130777

Name of lead inspector: Bev Barlow HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. West Nottinghamshire College is a large general further education (FE) college. The main campus is in Mansfield with a smaller site in Ashfield and a further six specialist centres delivering vocational training. It delivers community education across 58 local community venues to around 1,200 learners. The college is the only FE provider in the local area. Learners mostly come from Nottinghamshire and north-east Derbyshire which are urban areas with some significant levels of deprivation. The local unemployment rate is higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is just below the national average. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds in the college is 6% which is higher than in the local community.
2. The college provides courses in all subject areas from pre-entry level to higher education. In 2010/11 there were 10,238 college-based learners enrolled; of these 3,019 were full-time learners. The highest numbers are in preparation for life and work; engineering and manufacturing technologies; health, public services and care; visual and performing arts and media, and business administration. About 70% of learners are adults, mostly on part-time courses. The majority of learners aged 16 to 18 study full time. Around 20% of learners have declared a disability and/or learning difficulty. The college delivers part-time courses for 597 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local high schools, specific projects for around 120 young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and higher education courses to 619 learners.
3. Since the last inspection the number of learners on work-based programmes has increased significantly. The college now works with 47 subcontractors, overseeing their provision to around 5,000 apprentices. In addition there are just over 1,000 directly funded college apprentices and around 4,100 learners on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace.
4. The college's vision is to be "a dynamic college for aspiring communities" and its mission is "learners at the heart of excellence".
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - Nottinghamshire County Council (adult community learning)
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Ambertrain (apprentices)
 - Arriva Passenger Services (NVQ)
 - Assessors on Line (apprentices)
 - Balfour Beatty Utility Solutions (NVQ)
 - Connexions (employability - specialist NEET project)

- Construct HR (NVQ)
- CQM (apprentices and NVQ)
- Cresta (NVQ)
- CTC Training & Assessment (NVQ)
- DB Schenker (NVQ)
- Distinctive Training (apprentices and NVQ)
- Elite Professional Training Services (apprentices and NVQ)
- Embrace (employability - specialist NEET project)
- Emmaus Trust (employability - specialist NEET project)
- First Group (NVQ)
- Fit UK Enterprises (apprentices)
- GTG Services (NVQ)
- HSU International (apprentices)
- Key Training & Learning (apprentices and NVQ)
- Linden Management (apprentices and NVQ)
- London Hair Academy (apprentices and NVQ)
- Malvern House Training Solutions (apprentices)
- Manatec (apprentices and NVQ)
- Mines Rescue Service (NVQ)
- MTM Training (apprentices and NVQ)
- Nail & Beauty School (apprentices)
- NGTC (apprentices and NVQ)
- NE Group (apprentices)
- One to One Support Services (apprentices and NVQ)
- Pat Clarke Qualifications (apprentices and NVQ)
- Priory Trust (apprentices)
- Prospect Training (Yorkshire) (apprentices)
- Prospects Training Int T/A Geason (apprentices and NVQ)
- QA Associates (apprentices and NVQ)
- Qualitrain (apprentices and NVQ)
- Real Time Training (apprentices)
- Richard Owen Training (apprentices and NVQ)
- Right Track Training Solutions (apprentices)
- Right Track Social Enterprise (employability - specialist NEET project)

- SFHT (apprentices and NVQ)
- Safety & Access (apprentices and NVQ)
- Safety Plus (apprentices and NVQ)
- Safety Problem Solutions (apprentices and NVQ)
- Serac (NVQ)
- Tarmac (NVQ)
- The NE Group (apprentices)
- Thirdstar (apprentices)
- Trackwork (apprentices)
- Ultimate Performance Business Solutions (apprentices and NVQ)
- Valkyrie Support Services (apprentices and NVQ)
- White Rose (apprentices)
- YMCA (employability - specialist NEET project)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning</p>	<p>597 part-time learners</p> <p>2,958 full-time learners 669 part-time learners</p> <p>532 full-time learners 5 part-time learners</p>
<p>Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)</p>	<p>1,099 full-time learners 5,534 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: NVQs in the workplace Apprenticeships</p>	<p>6,725 learners 5,037 apprentices</p>
<p>Adult and community learning</p>	<p>1,205 learners</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Health, social care and childcare	3
Engineering (work-based)	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy (college-based)	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy (work-based)	2
Visual and performing arts	2
Literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	3
Business (work-based)	2

Overall effectiveness

- West Nottinghamshire College is a good college with many positive features, but it needs to improve some key aspects, particularly in relation to some aspects of teaching and learning, if it is to achieve its ambition to be outstanding. On college-based provision, following a dip in 2009/10, success rates improved in 2010/11 and are now close to the national average. Learners aged 16 to 18 on advanced-level courses and adults on intermediate-level programmes do not achieve well. Pupils from local schools, adult learners on community-based courses and vulnerable young people engaged in projects to

encourage them to undertake further training achieve outstanding results. On work-based provision most apprentices and employees studying NVQs achieve their qualification in the planned time. Most learners make good progress, contribute well to their community and develop a good range of skills that enhance their job prospects. Learners enjoy their courses in college and in the workplace and are encouraged successfully to raise their aspirations and adopt healthy lifestyles.

8. The range of provision meets the needs of local and national priorities very well. However, the quality of college-based courses is very mixed; many subjects are good but too many are satisfactory and inspectors found hairdressing and beauty therapy to be inadequate. Across the college, too many lessons are satisfactory and do not include a sufficient range of activities to ensure learners of all abilities progress at a good pace. Work-based provision, delivered directly by the college, the large number of subcontractors and many prestigious employers, is good. Partnerships are exemplary and provide considerable benefits to learners. Initial guidance, care and personal support are good and are particularly effective for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the quality of tutorials and the use of precise targets to monitor learners' progress are not consistently effective.
9. College leaders and governors have established a strong culture of innovation and aspiration that is focused closely on developing learners' employability. Staff are very clear about their roles in achieving this vision. The college is an inclusive and harmonious community where equality and diversity are promoted well. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are comprehensive. The self-assessment processes and the subsequent reports at whole-college and subject-level are informed by data but judgements made are insufficiently self-critical to raise standards across the provision. Many of the grades in the self-assessment report are too generous and the aspects needing improvement are not precise. Quality improvement plans are thorough and focus on reaching ambitious targets across key performance indicators and areas for improvement. The college collects and takes seriously the views of learners and stakeholders in striving to make improvements.

Main findings

- Success rates on college-based provision dipped in 2009/10, primarily due to an increase in the number of learners leaving early, to just below that of similar colleges. Since then strategies have resulted in small improvements in retention, particularly this year, and outcomes are now satisfactory. There is considerable variability across age groups and levels, and between subjects. In particular the success rates of adults on intermediate-level programmes and learners aged 16 to 18 on advanced-level courses are low.
- The college has increased significantly the proportion of work-based provision, the majority of which is delivered through subcontractors. Most apprentices achieve their qualifications in the planned time. The achievements of learners

with a specific learning need, pupils aged 14 to 16 studying college vocational qualifications, adults on community provision and those learners on specialist short programmes designed to re-engage them in education and training are outstanding.

- Most college-based learners make at least satisfactory progress. Those on entry- and foundation-level courses make good progress. Work-based learners make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Learners enjoy their studies and feel safe. On most courses the standard of their work is good. They develop good personal and vocational skills that prepare them well for employment.
- The quality of teaching varies significantly across different types of provision and within subject areas. Too many lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory and a minority were judged to be inadequate. Training and assessment for work-based learners are good. For college-based learners teaching and learning are satisfactory. Attendance during the inspection was low. Teachers are well qualified and receive a comprehensive range of support to improve but these have not had sufficient impact in improving the quality of lessons.
- Information from the initial assessment of learners' levels of literacy and numeracy is used well to identify and support those in need of additional learning support. However, teachers make insufficient use of this information and that from ongoing assessments to plan learning materials and assessment activities that ensure they provide suitable challenge to all learners. Although most teachers plan a range of relevant learning activities they do not always make best use of the time allocated to lessons. Not all teachers check learners' spelling and grammar when marking work.
- Significant changes in the provision have focused acutely on local needs and national priorities. The range of programmes within college and work-based learning is extensive. The college's work to raise the aspirations and improve the life chances of young people who have previously been disaffected from education is outstanding. Not all provision meets the needs of learners effectively. It is inadequate in college-based hairdressing and beauty therapy.
- The curriculum has a good and increasing focus on employability. The college has increased successfully the development of learners' employability skills through a number of imaginative projects. Opportunities for work experience in a few subject areas are limited. The development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. The transition from key skills to functional skills qualifications in employer-responsive provision has been slow.
- Partnership arrangements are outstanding. The college works in close collaboration with an extensive range of employers, subcontractors, community groups and local schools. Strategic partnerships are well established, often innovative and highly effective. Partnership working in subject areas is mostly good and enriches learners' educational experiences.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners benefit greatly from an extensive range of flexible support services. Initial advice and guidance is

thorough. Specialist support for those with identified support needs is very good. In the majority of cases individual tutorials are effective in supporting learners' development. However, the quality of target setting within learners' individual learning plans is too variable.

- The Principal, senior staff and governors set a clear strategic direction. Staff at all levels understand their roles in achieving ambitious goals. Curriculum leadership and management are variable; management in four areas inspected was good, satisfactory in two and inadequate in college-based hairdressing and beauty therapy. The management of work-based learning is good.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good as is the promotion of equality and diversity. Managers and staff understand their responsibilities in tackling discrimination and raising aspirations so that learners from all groups achieve equally well. Arrangements to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participate are particularly effective. The use of the views of learners and stakeholders to inform improvement is outstanding.
- College self-assessment processes often fail to identify crucial areas requiring improvement. The college's lesson observation process is not sufficiently robust to ensure consistently good quality lessons. Over grading in the overall college and subject self-assessment reports mitigates against a self-critical quality assurance culture. However, quality improvement plans are more robust and strategies to reverse the decline in retention have had an impact and overall performance is improving.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on college-based courses, particularly at advanced level for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults on intermediate-level courses, by closely monitoring their attendance and progress so that fewer leave college early and ensure that they have sufficiently challenging targets to work towards so that they achieve their full potential.
- Raise success rates on apprenticeship programmes by embedding the systems used to monitor the performance of college-based and subcontracted provision so that good practice is shared, a broader curriculum is implemented and issues identified as requiring improvement are acted upon promptly.
- Rapidly improve the quality of college-based hairdressing and beauty therapy provision by ensuring that staff maintain the salons to a professional standard and that the quality of lessons improves so that all learners develop the vocational skills needed to achieve their qualification.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing training for teachers on using the information from the initial and ongoing assessments of learners' progress to inform the planning of a range of learning activities that engage and support all learners. Improve the lesson observation system to provide an accurate agenda for improvement and ensure that teachers are accountable for delivering a consistently good learning experience.

- Increase the focus on improving all learners' literacy and numeracy skills by developing and implementing a strategy for monitoring this provision across the college, including on work-based programmes. Ensure that all teachers check learners' spelling and grammar when marking work and, where support for literacy and numeracy is identified, there are clear targets set in learners' development plans.
- Improve the rigour of the self-assessment process so that both whole-college and subject reports provide self-critical views that accurately inform quality improvement plans and enable these plans to include focused targets against which progress can be monitored.

Summary of the views of learners as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the very friendly and welcoming atmosphere at all college sites
- the good additional learning support
- the helpful and approachable teachers who give freely of their time
- practical lessons
- that their achievements are celebrated widely
- the wide choice of courses available
- being an apprentice and gaining a recognised qualification
- the friendly canteen staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the organisation and planning of assignments
- access to more computers and laptops
- the teaching of English and mathematics skills to be more relevant to their main qualification
- the quality of teaching in a few subjects, particularly AS- and A-level courses.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the college's flexible and responsive approach
- the regular celebration of learners' success
- the apprenticeship training agency which helps them to employ apprentices at reduced risk
- the good levels of communication
- the support available to them and their employees.

What employers would like to see improved:

- a reduction in the bureaucracy
- receiving more detailed information about learners' off-the-job training.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

10. The college has resolved partially the key issues identified at the last inspection. However, success rates are not at the same consistently high rates as they were in 2008. The proportion of learners progressing to higher education has increased. The use of assessment to support learning remains a weakness in too many subjects. The use of data to monitor learners' progress and to analyse their performance has improved. Despite the cancellation of a major rebuilding programme the college has undertaken significant capital investment in new accommodation. The college has successfully realigned its curriculum and extended its apprenticeship programmes to just over half of its provision. The quality of the provision in work-based learning and college-based courses for adults is good but for learners aged 16 to 18 it is satisfactory. Partnerships are excellent; the college is a key player in raising aspirations and improving job opportunities in the local area.
11. Quality improvement plans are detailed and have led to improvements in work-based programmes and to many of the subjects delivered in college. In a few courses poor performance has not been tackled in a sufficiently robust manner and learners on these courses have not achieved well for several years. The whole college and many subject self-assessment reports are over-generous in their grading and do not always identify critical aspects that require improvement. However, governors and staff have a good understanding of areas to be improved and indicate clearly how this will be achieved in the quality improvement plan and through the standards committee papers.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. The overall success rate declined in 2009/10 and while there was a slight improvement in 2010/11 it remains just below the national average. Consequently the college's national position, when compared to that at the last inspection, has deteriorated. Success rates vary considerably across age groups and levels, and between subjects. Adult success rates improved faster in 2010/11 than those for learners aged 16 to 18. Learners aged 16 to 18 on entry- and foundation-level courses achieve well but adults studying at these levels achieve satisfactorily. Success rates are low for adults at intermediate level and for learners aged 16 to 18 at advanced level.
13. Learners who complete their courses mostly pass the qualification but too many leave college early. Just over half of learners who leave early do so to secure a job. This year the proportion leaving early has declined slightly. Historically, too many advanced-level learners leave the college in the first year of their course. However, the retention of current first-year advanced-level learners has improved significantly and is currently high.

14. Learners achieve very well on the large number of short qualifications, many of which are relevant to enhancing their curriculum vitae and so improving their job prospects. Additional opportunities, embedded in vocational programmes and through extra-curricular and whole college events, develop learners' entrepreneurial skills and promote enhanced career prospects very well.
15. Most learners on entry- and foundation-level courses make good progress and a high proportion progress to higher-level courses. Too few intermediate-level learners achieve high grades and progression to advanced level is low. Around two thirds of learners who take a GCSE qualification achieve grade A* to C. At advanced level most learners achieve grades in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. However, progress is weaker on AS- and A-level subjects than on vocational provision. Progression to higher education is satisfactory.
16. Success rates for apprentices declined over a three-year period but improved in 2010/11 and are now good. The proportion of apprentices completing their programme on time is high. However, there are significant variations; success rates are high in business administration but are low in health and social care and hairdressing. Around 80% of the 2,600 apprentices who have completed so far this year have achieved their qualification. Success rates on NVQ programmes are high across all subjects and most learners complete within their planned time. Most work-based learners progress very well. They demonstrate good vocational skills and confidently discuss their theoretical knowledge.
17. Pupils aged 14 to 16 from local high schools do exceptionally well and the vast majority pass their vocational qualification and a significant proportion progress to a full-time college course. Young people who previously were not in education employment or training make very good progress. They develop skills that are life changing; their self-esteem and confidence are raised and almost all progress to either a college course or an apprenticeship. A broad range of innovative projects provides good opportunities for learners to develop their employability skills and progression to employment is good.
18. The college has successfully reduced identified gaps in the achievement of different ethnic groups. Males and females achieve equally well. Learners with a declared learning difficulty and/or disability achieve better than their peers. Adult learners, on the broad range of community-based qualifications, benefit from a significant enhancement to the quality of their life and they achieve exceptionally well.
19. Learners enjoy college- and work-based learning. The majority of learners produce good work but there is too much variability across subjects. The quality of work in performing arts and music is very good, but it is poor in hairdressing. Work-based assessment portfolios are of a high standard. Learners' attendance during the inspection was poor. Attendance and punctuality in the workplace are good.

20. Learners' economic and social well-being are enhanced well. Many develop useful vocational and employment skills which increase their employment and promotion prospects. The proportion of apprentices who stay with their employer at the end of their programme has improved significantly and is now very high. The college is successful in moving apprentices from being employed by their training agency to full employment with their host employer. In the rail industry learners wait too long after their initial training to enter useful employment so that they can complete their apprenticeship.
21. On most work-based provision key skills are developed and assessed early in the programme. For some adults the achievement of these skills is life changing. The achievement of functional skills is satisfactory. Most learners make better progress in developing their literacy skills than those in numeracy. Too many learners do not achieve the intermediate-level key or functional skills qualifications that they require to prepare them fully for employment.
22. Learners feel very safe in college and in the workplace. Most learners apply safe working practices well. Their understanding of personal safety, including the safe use of the internet, is very good. Learners are courteous and respectful of each other and behaviour is good. Learners say that they know who to go to if there are any issues and are confident that they would be dealt with promptly.
23. The promotion of healthy lifestyles in college is extensive but is limited in work-based provision. Personal health and well-being are promoted effectively through tutorials and by a team of support staff. A wide array of opportunities exists for learners to participate in college or local community activities. Many initiatives are very successful in raising learners' awareness of topical issues such as sustainability and homelessness. Over a third of learners actively participate as volunteers. While individual projects are evaluated for their effectiveness, the college does not systematically monitor participation and the impact of these initiatives.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

24. Overall, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is satisfactory but there is too much variability across types of provision and within subjects. Teachers, trainers and assessors are well qualified and have access to a large range of staff development and support, but these activities have not been sufficiently effective in ensuring that the learning experience is consistently good or better. Too many lessons seen by inspectors were judged to be satisfactory and a minority were inadequate. Attendance in lessons seen by inspectors was low.
25. Training and assessment for employed learners are good, particularly at employers' premises where learners are coached and supported to gain a good range of vocational skills. Within the larger engineering employers, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is managed well and apprentices plan

their assessments around the business improvement needs of their employers. Employed learners participate well in off-the-job training. They are keen to develop and demonstrate their skills and answer questions. For college-based learners the quality of lessons varies significantly and is satisfactory overall.

26. The most effective trainers and teachers plan their sessions carefully using their subject knowledge to plan learning activities that are relevant and motivational. They use practical work well to explain theory and prepare learners well for employment. The purpose of each session is explained carefully so that learners understand what they have to do and why. The objectives of many lessons are linked closely to the assessment requirements of the qualification. For example, in a very effective interactive media lesson learners enjoyed the activities and used imaginative resources to develop their thinking skills and broader understanding of the historical context. However, too many teachers do not plan their lessons well. Some start their lessons with inappropriate activities; others talk for too long without engaging the learners in challenging tasks and discussions. The pace of some lessons is slow with the result that learners become bored and disinterested.
27. In some lessons the teacher uses information from the initial and ongoing assessments of learners' levels of literacy and numeracy, and their progress in developing vocational skills, to set individual targets and deliver challenging learning activities. For example, construction learners work on challenging individual projects which keep them fully engaged for the whole of the allotted time and they are able to talk confidently about their knowledge, skills development and progress. However, this good practice in lesson planning is not consistent. In too many lessons learners complete the same activities; some finish quickly as the tasks are too easy and then have to wait for others to catch up while others find the work too difficult and have to wait for extra support.
28. The quality of learning accommodation and resources varies significantly. In construction and performing arts they are very good but in hairdressing and beauty therapy the salons are poorly managed and do not provide an appropriate environment to enable learners to develop professional skills and practices. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning in and outside lessons is very good in areas such as visual and performing arts and media, but the potential of technology is not exploited fully by all staff.
29. Assessment of employed learners' work and progress against their targets is carried out regularly and thoroughly. A good range of NVQ assessment evidence is used such as direct observation, photographs and employer testimonies. Arrangements to assess work-based learners are flexible to meet their work patterns. Learners have the opportunity to review their progress regularly. In the best of these reviews employers, learners and assessors accurately review all aspects of the learners' programmes and set appropriate medium- and short-term targets. However, too many reviews do not provide

learners and their employers with the information they need to understand fully their next steps because their targets are limited to assessment activities.

30. The best teachers and trainers use questions very well to monitor learners' progress and to check their understanding. They direct their questions to ensure that all learners are listening and participating, and they ask supplementary and probing questions. However, too many teachers rely on open questions, allowing some learners to dominate, or they accept superficial answers and do not challenge learners to develop higher-level skills. Effective systems are used on most courses to monitor learners' progress in completing the units of their qualifications and this helps them to take responsibility for their own learning. However, arrangements for monitoring learners' progress against their broader learning targets are not as systematic. Learners receive positive feedback and encouragement during lessons and they develop positive relationships with their teachers and assessors. Most marked work helps learners to understand what they need to do to improve but too many teachers do not correct spelling and grammar errors.
31. Learners in need of additional support are identified quickly. Effective support is provided promptly by specialist staff through one-to-one sessions and extra group activities and they achieve better than their peers. Support for literacy and numeracy, provided during vocational theory lessons on foundation-level courses, is particularly helpful.
32. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. The curriculum is planned carefully, is very responsive to regional and national initiatives, and evolves continuously to meet the needs of the local community. A very wide range of programmes is available across the college with clear progression routes from entry to advanced level or higher. The provision at the college's Ashfield Centre is outstanding and significantly raises the aspirations and life chances of young people who have previously been disengaged from education. However, while most provision meets the needs of learners extremely well, a small minority of the college's provision does not. The college has increased notably the emphasis on developing learners' employability skills and business acumen through a number of imaginative projects. However, there are not enough opportunities for some learners to participate in work experience.
33. The range of extra-curricular activity is broad and participation is high in most subjects. Learners' participation in sport has improved markedly since the last inspection through activities such as a mini Olympics event. However, participation in recreational and competitive sport remains relatively low.
34. The design and rapid growth of employer-responsive provision meets national priorities well. The college has reduced its provision of NVQ-only programmes and engaged with local and national employers to deliver apprenticeships. A very high proportion of work-based programmes are delivered by subcontractors across the country. Programmes are matched well to employer

needs and include specialist partners in rail transportation and food manufacturing. The required transition from key skills to functional skills qualifications in employer-responsive provision has been slow.

35. Partnership arrangements are very productive and frequently innovative. The college works in close collaboration with an extensive range of partners and contributes significantly to the economic development of the local area. It supports subcontractors very well through a range of training events and by sharing good practice. The Principal is proactive in championing high-quality and purposeful alliances that successfully promote social inclusion. Well-established and influential collaborations exist with many organisations that benefit learners. For example, construction apprentices carry out repairs on vacant council houses. Partners value highly the open relationships and the college's enthusiasm to explore innovative ways of working. Secondary school links are very productive and support pupils' transition to college very well. Work with primary school pupils is helping to raise their aspirations. Although most subjects have very good links that enhance learners' experiences, in a minority, including work-based engineering and performing arts, opportunities are underdeveloped.
36. Care, guidance and support are good. Learners benefit greatly from an extensive range of flexible support services, including a very well used free college bus service. Initial advice and guidance are now more consistent and have been effective in reducing the numbers of learners leaving early. Transition arrangements are extremely well planned and enable learners to settle quickly into college life. Specialist support for those with identified learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities, and for vulnerable learners, is very good and is enhanced notably by the wide range and use of assistive technologies. The quality of additional learning support is mostly good and very well organised.
37. Group tutorials are held frequently and contribute very effectively to learners' personal, social and moral development. The promotion of themes such as citizenship, personal safety and equality and diversity is good. Curriculum areas are given autonomy to develop their own tutorial programmes. In the majority of cases tutorials are planned carefully and are engaging but a few are less effective. Several subjects use external speakers and cover topics that raise learners' interest and knowledge. For example, in motor vehicle the police delivered sessions on road safety and in travel and tourism learners were encouraged to consider issues of human rights and child labour which were linked well to work in the travel industry.
38. Learners' progress and attendance are monitored closely at one-to-one meetings with their tutor. However, the targets set in individual learning plans are often insufficiently precise and/or too focused on task completion. As a result, it is not always easy for teachers to monitor learners' progress effectively. In several cases, opportunities are missed to target and monitor learners' literacy and numeracy skills.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

39. Leadership and management are good. The Principal's innovative vision is ably supported by senior managers and governors. They set a highly ambitious agenda for the college with a strong focus on developing employment skills. Staff are very clear about their role in achieving the college's strategic targets and mission. Significant changes since the last inspection are acutely focused on local needs and on national priorities such as the development of the extensive and well-managed apprenticeship provision. Success rates on college-based provision dipped in 2009/10. Strategies to reverse this have led to small improvements. Curriculum management is variable and too often it is not sufficiently focused on raising standards in day-to-day operations.
40. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges for the region and possess a wide range of experience and expertise. They carry out their statutory duties well and provide appropriate challenge and support on a wide range of issues. Governors have played a pivotal role in the decision to increase employer-responsive provision and in the planning and implementation of the accommodation developments. However, they have not reviewed the self-assessment report with sufficient rigour. Link governors monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of policies on safeguarding and equality and diversity.
41. An appropriate culture of safeguarding and health and safety is in place across the college. Criminal Records Bureau checks go beyond the college's legal requirements. Safeguarding records are maintained on a comprehensive single central register that includes details of the college's safe recruitment practices and relevant staff training. Awareness raising programmes support the highly effective implementation of policies for many vulnerable learners to participate, to develop their skills and to feel valued. Learners feel very safe. When learners raise concerns about safety, the college takes speedy action to tackle the issues. The implementation of health and safety checks, training and risk assessment are in line with legislation. A safeguarding team coordinates safeguarding activities very well across the college. The few incidents and accidents that occur are monitored carefully.
42. The college is an inclusive and harmonious community characterised by an ethos of tolerance and mutual respect. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to promote equality and diversity and raise expectations and aspirations and deliver them well. Any discrimination is challenged strongly. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that all learners can participate well. A comprehensive and up-to-date range of policies and procedures are in place. Regular reports analyse their impact, including the success of the college in reducing any identified achievement gaps of different groups, and these are available on the college's website. Comprehensive risk assessments, additional and bespoke staff training and necessary adjustments are made to meet the specific complex needs of individuals.

43. An equality and diversity toolkit is available on the college's staff intranet and the various portals for different stakeholders. Staff training on the promotion of equality and diversity is comprehensive. Most, but not all staff, promote equality and diversity well. Work-based assessors do not always develop learners' understanding of key issues during their progress reviews. Occupational gender bias is recognised and initiatives to recruit more learners into non-traditional roles including women into engineering and construction are successful. This promotion is less well developed by a few subcontractors who do not actively promote their programmes to non-traditional groups.
44. Arrangements for collating and acting on the views of learners are outstanding. Staff take the views of learners and employers seriously, responding positively to their requests and suggestions wherever possible. Learners express their views through a wide variety of mechanisms including surveys, class and course representatives, on-line forums, regular luncheon sessions with the Principal and senior managers. Learners speak well of the impact they can make to bring about improvements. The college systematically gathers the views of a wide range of stakeholders. Intranet forums often provide staff with useful feedback which leads to subsequent improvements.
45. Self-assessment is an inclusive process involving all staff and incorporates the views of learners very well. The process is good at highlighting the college's strengths but it does not always identify crucial areas requiring improvement. The whole college self-assessment report does not offer robust evidence to justify the grades and it is not sufficiently detailed to be a fully effective driver of improvement. In work-based provision all subcontracting partners produce an annual self-assessment which is validated by the college. Partners are rated according to risk and while data are used well to monitor their performance the judgements are sometimes generous and actions are not always implemented swiftly.
46. Quality improvement and business plans are thorough, well focused and include key performance indicators. These provide a more accurate agenda for improvement but on occasions they are too focused on achieving a target rather than improving the quality of provision. Management information is accurate and used extensively by staff to monitor performance. Data are analysed but occasionally this is too simplistic and does not clearly identify what needs to improve to raise standards. Over-generous assessment of too much of the provision mitigates against a more self-critical quality assurance culture.
47. The college's arrangements for quality assuring lessons do not provide an accurate agenda for improvement. The observation process gives teachers too much notice about which lesson will be observed and so they can prepare well to secure a high grade. The observation records indicate that not enough priority is given to learners' progress and their standards of work when assessing the quality of a lesson. Although the college has a range of strategies for assuring the quality of teaching and learning these are not sufficiently

effective in holding teachers and managers to account for the quality of learners' day-to-day experience. Grades awarded to teachers by the college are significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors.

48. The college plans, manages and monitors its finances well. Its accommodation and investment strategies are well considered. It responded with alacrity to the loss of funding to build a new college campus and quickly established alternative plans. Priority was given to subjects where new accommodation would have maximum impact on learner experience. Accommodation and equipment facilities are particularly strong in creative arts, engineering and construction. Significant investment in ILT has made a difference in developing innovative techniques to support learning and has laid an infrastructure for further development. Human resources management is highly effective and staff use the electronic database well to monitor and access training and development to meet their needs. Value for money is good.

Subject areas

Health, social care and childcare

Grade 3

Context

49. A wide range of full-time and part-time vocational courses is offered from entry level to higher education in childcare and from entry level to advanced level in health and social care. Of the 809 learners on college-based provision, 478 are aged 16 to 18 and the vast majority study full-time. Of the 331 adult learners, 143 follow full-time courses and 188 study part-time. Some 90% of learners are female.

Key findings

- Success rates in childcare are high, except at entry level where they are satisfactory. Success rates on foundation- and intermediate-level health and social care courses are satisfactory. On advanced-level health and social care courses success rates are declining and poor. The primary cause of low success rates is poor retention; most learners who complete their course achieve the qualification.
- Progress on most courses is satisfactory. The proportion of learners on health and social care courses achieving high grades has declined and is very low. Practical skills development on childcare courses is good and supports the achievement of workplace skills. Work produced in class and for assessment purposes are at the standard expected for the level of course. Attendance during inspection was low.
- The proportion of learners progressing to higher-level qualifications in college or into relevant employment is good at all levels. A good proportion of learners completing intermediate-level courses progress to work in the care sector. Around a third of advanced-level learners progress to higher education and a similar proportion go into care-related jobs.
- Learners feel safe both in college and in their work placements. Induction includes guidance to develop learners' awareness of keeping themselves and the clients they work with safe. All work placements have regular risk assessments.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers use a range of strategies to engage and motivate learners, building on previous work and closely linked to assessments. Activities are planned to develop a good understanding of relevant and often complex topics such as the power of advertising and ethical considerations. Teachers use questioning effectively to test and extend learning. Lessons are frequently linked to work-placement activities and link theory to practical work well.
- In less successful lessons, teachers provide too few opportunities for learners to contribute, inhibiting the development of deeper understanding. Teachers do not check learning regularly enough. Learners complete work at a pedestrian

pace and their progress is slow. Final plenary sessions are not always completed satisfactorily so that teachers are unable to assess how well learners have met the lesson objectives.

- Teachers' assessment of learners' work is accurate. Peer assessment is used well. For example, in one lesson learners reviewed each others' work on diet and nutrition. However, teachers do not always give sufficiently detailed and constructive feedback to help learners improve their work and correct punctuation and spelling.
- Learners are set individual learning targets but far too frequently these are too generic. Often they do not provide more able learners with appropriate challenge. Learners' progress is not monitored effectively. The college was unable to produce data during the inspection to measure learners' performance against minimum target grades.
- Partnerships are effective. The close links with employers provide high quality work placements and good training opportunities. Learners engage in a wide range of enrichment activities that contributes effectively to their personal and vocational development and enables them to put their learning into context. Several learners deliver a British Sign Language course to their peers.
- Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory but some students are not fully aware of the demands of the course. Additional learning support is effective in meeting the needs of learners. In-class support is good. Learners with specific needs are supported very well, resources are adapted appropriately and they contribute fully to class activities.
- Weekly tutorial sessions are not planned well enough to provide learners with effective one-to-one support and progress monitoring. In most sessions individuals discuss their progress with their teacher at the front of the class while their peers complete a group activity. Consequently there is not enough privacy for one-to-one discussions and the group sessions do not always meet their objectives as there is not enough teacher direction.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course performance is inconsistent. Meetings are held regularly but are not always sufficiently focused on improving the learners' experience. Communication to staff is not always effective. Managers do not use data well enough to identify areas for improvement, particularly on courses where performance is low.
- The self-assessment process involves all staff but the grades awarded are often overstated and not backed up by robust evidence. Many of the strengths highlighted are expected norms and some of the areas for improvement identified at inspection were not included. The quality improvement plan and its implementation have not succeeded in improving the provision.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention, particularly at advanced level, by ensuring that learners understand the demands of the course before they start and that their attendance and progress against specific targets are monitored closely.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard through the sharing of good practice. Ensure that all teachers plan activities that engage, motivate and challenge learners of all abilities so that they all make good progress.
- Improve the organisation of weekly tutorial sessions so that group activities are meaningful and delivered well, and learners' one-to-one discussions with their tutor are confidential.
- Improve the accuracy and rigour of the self-assessment report to ensure that it accurately reflects the quality of provision and clearly identifies key areas for improvement. Establish robust improvement strategies and monitor their implementation closely.

Engineering (work-based)

Grade 2

Context

50. The work-based provision includes 754 intermediate apprentices, 277 advanced apprentices and 466 learners enrolled on NVQ programmes across a broad range of engineering subjects including general engineering, motor vehicle, manufacturing and rail transportation. Around 8% of learners are female and 11% are from minority ethnic groups. Much of the provision is managed through subcontractors and learners are located throughout the country. Numbers have expanded significantly during the past two years.

Key findings

- Success rates for work-based learners are satisfactory and most complete their qualification in the agreed time. Success rates declined over the past two years but are very good, so far, in the current year. Success rates are consistent across all subjects.
- Learners enjoy their courses and many make rapid progress. They demonstrate good vocational skills and confidently discuss the theoretical knowledge associated with their chosen subject. Assessment portfolios are of a high standard. Key skills are achieved early in the programme. For some adults, the achievement of mathematics and English qualifications is life changing.
- Learners feel very safe and there is an exceptionally strong focus on promoting safe work practices. Learners are trained to carry out risk assessments and consistently use personal protective equipment. Good quality on-the-job training with excellent support from their employers helps learners to progress quickly with some gaining early promotion. In some cases, learners work successfully with trainers and managers to improve production methods.
- Some apprentices are employed through the college's apprenticeship training agency. Progression into permanent employment has improved and is now good. On the rail transportation programme, learners complete an initial intensive training period before working with railway maintenance companies but too many have to wait too long before they gain employment.
- Training is good. With most employers, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is managed well and many apprentices plan their assessment around the business improvement needs of their employers. Learners appreciate the small class sizes and teachers' technical and vocational expertise. Equipment is of a good industry standard but a few on-site training rooms are cramped.
- Assessment of learners' work is regular and thorough. Learners are set clear targets and their progress is monitored well. A good range of NVQ assessment evidence is used such as direct observation, photographs, video recordings and employer testimonies.
- The range of programmes available for apprentices and other work-based learners is good, and covers many specialist subjects such as rail

transportation. However, only a small proportion of learners are taking higher-level qualifications.

- Partnerships with employers and subcontractors are particularly productive. Many specialist subcontractors provide the college with access to a wide range of employers. Through its subcontractors, the college is particularly responsive to the needs of industry across the region. Employers and subcontractors value the support and professional development programmes provided by the college.
- Support for work-based learners is satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are good. A few learners leave their programmes early because the programmes do not meet their needs. Initial assessment accurately identifies learners' needs and support is appropriate.
- Learners receive good informal support from assessors and trainers although this support is left to the employer's human resources department in several organisations. Progress reviews are not always effective as learners are not clear about why they are completed. Target setting is weak and reviews do not consider potential barriers to completing work in enough detail.
- Learners' awareness of equality and diversity is good. They have an appreciation of gender bias, harassment and bullying and the need to respect others but their understanding is not checked and developed sufficiently during reviews. The provision successfully promotes participation, particularly of adults returning to learning.
- Leadership and management are good. Subcontractors are managed well. Communication and the flow of information, including performance data are excellent. The independent subcontractors feel they are part of the college and adopt their systems and procedures. Learners' progress is frequently discussed between subcontractors and college staff. Preparation for the introduction of functional skills is currently under-developed.
- Self-assessment is effective and all parties have a clear understanding of most key issues. Quality assurance arrangements are good and key learning processes are observed. The quality improvement plans are robust but the college's monitoring of how swiftly subcontractors are implementing the actions is not sufficiently detailed.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates by ensuring that all learners are placed on the right programmes and are fully committed to them.
- Improve the effectiveness of progress reviews by ensuring learners and employers fully understand their purpose and how they should be used to set and monitor the achievement of learning targets and to identify and overcome any barriers to progress.
- Develop and implement a strategy for the introduction of functional skills across apprenticeship programmes.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy (college-based)

Grade 4

Context

51. The college offers full- and part-time courses from entry level to higher education in hairdressing and beauty therapy at "The Academy" located in the centre of Mansfield. Of the 520 learners on college-based provision, 282 are aged 16 to 18 and 238 are adults. The majority study full-time and almost all learners are female.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are inadequate. Success rates are satisfactory on beauty therapy courses at all levels. They are poor on intermediate- and advanced-level hairdressing and have been so for the last three years. Learners aged 16 to 18 do not achieve as well as adults. For adults studying intermediate-level courses retention has declined and is low. Current in-year data show that a satisfactory proportion of learners now remain on their course.
- Learners' progress is poor. Very few progress to a higher-level course and the proportion securing employment at the end of their training is low. Learners do not develop practical salon skills well enough and the running of the salons does not reflect good industry standard practices. Attendance and punctuality in the lessons observed was low.
- The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Theory lessons are more productive than the practical sessions in the salon. Only a minority of teachers use a sufficient variety of activities to engage learners and develop their knowledge. In too many practical sessions learners are not engaged in meaningful activities because there are too few clients.
- Assessment practice and the quality of portfolios are satisfactory. Learners spend too much time in lessons completing written portfolio work at a pedestrian pace. Teachers provide learners with supportive and constructive feedback but spelling and grammatical errors are often not corrected.
- Learners present a professional corporate identity through their uniform and general appearance. Learners work courteously and are respectful of each other and their clients. However, insufficient emphasis is placed on maintaining high standards in cleanliness, hygiene and sterilisation of equipment. The promotion of health and safety is not routinely reinforced; consequently learners do not always use safe working practices.
- A broad range of courses is offered in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. Learners benefit from a good range of enrichment opportunities to develop specialist skills, for example, they enter competitions and visit trade fairs to learn about new products.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners are supported well by their teachers. However, initial advice and guidance are not sufficiently robust and

learners are not always fully aware of the demands of the course. Learners can access a broad range of welfare services.

- Regular individual tutorials enable learners to set learning targets and discuss their progress with their tutors. The targets are not always sufficiently challenging. For those learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities their support needs are identified and provided quickly.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The success rates in hairdressing have been low and declining for several years. Actions taken have not been sufficiently prompt or effective to raise standards. The management of salon practice is poor and practice does not reflect commercial standards. Plans are in place to provide new facilities at the college's main site.
- Teachers do not always promote equality and diversity well enough in theory and practical work. Learners' ability to discuss relevant gender, ethnicity and age-related topics within the industry are not developed sufficiently. Younger learners are not guided in how to develop a professional rapport with mature clients.
- The self-assessment process involves all staff. It does not place enough emphasis on achievement rates. The self-assessment report overstates many of the strengths and misses significant areas for improvement. Internal observations do not always provide an accurate picture of the quality of lessons. Learners' feedback on the quality of the provision is used to inform development.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates by ensuring that learners are enrolled on appropriate courses and are set challenging targets that meet industry expectations.
- Monitor learners' progress closely to ensure that they develop good practical skills, improve attendance and punctuality, and work at a productive pace when completing portfolio work so that they achieve high standards and make more rapid progress.
- Improve the delivery of the courses by ensuring that practical work is of a high standard, good practice in the delivery of theory lessons is shared across hairdressing and beauty therapy staff, and that equality and diversity are promoted well.
- Improve the management of salons so that they are kept clean and tidy, and ensure that learners develop professional practices in hygiene and safety to prepare them better for the workplace. Ensure there are sufficient clients for learners to work productively with in practical sessions and develop their skills.
- Improve the rigour and accuracy of self-assessment, including lesson observations to set an accurate agenda for improvement.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy (work-based)

Grade 2

Context

52. In work-based provision, the college delivers courses to 500 apprentices. The vast majority study beauty therapy with a large subcontractor. The number of hairdressing apprentices has increased this year and the college now works with some prestigious salons. Around half of the learners are aged 16 to 18 and almost all are female. Some 16% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage.

Key findings

- Success rates on beauty therapy courses are good and most learners complete their qualifications in the agreed time. Advanced-level beauty therapy apprentices achieve very well and in 2010/11 their success rate was well above the national average. The success rate of the small number of hairdressing apprentices is low. Almost all trainees on NVQ courses achieve their qualification in the planned time.
- Learners' progress is satisfactory overall and good for beauty therapy apprentices. Apprentices develop good commercial skills that prepare them well for working independently or in a commercial salon. Most learners develop good technical skills and learn how to deal with a broad range of clients.
- Learners on work-based provision benefit from good training and assessment. Their skills are supported well by their employers who provide regular on-the-job training. Their knowledge is enhanced by product manufacturers' exhibitions, competitions and courses. A few employers are not sufficiently aware of their apprentices' off-the-job training plans.
- In the best training sessions teachers carefully plan a variety of interesting activities that challenge learners to develop more complex skills and technical procedures. Learners are enthusiastic and display good professionalism and creativity, particularly during one-to-one salon training. However, college-based hairdressing apprentices do not get enough opportunities to work on clients and spend almost all their time carrying out procedures on mannequin heads.
- Workplace assessments are planned to meet learners' individual needs. Evidence that occurs during the working day is used well to support the assessment of technical and customer service skills. However, college-based apprentices do not always complete salon-based assessments in a timely fashion and so too many do not achieve their qualification in the agreed time. Too many of these apprentices have not yet completed their numeracy assessment.
- The quality of learners' portfolios is satisfactory and logbooks are completed accurately. Assignment work shows that learners develop good research techniques and competent IT skills. A good range of salon-based evidence is used, including photographs and witness statements, and this demonstrates high levels of competence. Teachers provide learners with supportive and

constructive feedback but spelling and grammatical errors are not always corrected.

- Learners adopt appropriate professional appearance. They work with a broad range of clients from diverse backgrounds and adapt their conversation appropriately to meet their clients' needs. Health and safety practices are appropriate and there is good attention to working with chemicals and to hygiene in the workplace, although these practices are not fully adhered to in the college salon or reinforced well enough during progress reviews.
- A broad curriculum provides good career pathways in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Progression to advanced-level apprenticeships is satisfactory and a minority progress to higher education. Learners can transfer from college-based courses to an apprenticeship if they gain relevant employment. Employers are very positive about their working relationship and communication with the college and its subcontracted partners.
- Learners benefit from good academic and pastoral support. Learners' skills in English and mathematics are assessed adequately at the start of their programme. Additional support for individuals with specific needs is provided promptly. Individual learning plans are good and optional units are carefully selected to meet individual salon requirements. Progress reviews are regular and fully involve employers and learners. Learners are given specific and useful targets, for example to use a particular product or piece of electrical equipment by the time of the next review.
- The new electronic system to record progress reviews is comprehensive and has the potential to enable managers to monitor learners' progress closely. It is not yet used by all subcontractors and the monitoring of learners' progress is underdeveloped. Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity matters and are respectful of each other and their clients. The use of progress reviews to develop their knowledge further is underdeveloped.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordination of sub-contractors is robust and the quality of the provision is checked regularly. Internal verification arrangements meet awarding body requirements. However, good practice in the subcontracted provision has not been shared and implemented in the college-based provision.
- The self-assessment report overstated strengths in the provision and missed a few areas for improvement. Learners' views about their programmes and facilities are used to inform change. Facilities at subcontractor premises and in salons are of a good commercial standard. However, accommodation for college-based apprentices is poor and college salons do not reflect industry standards.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of apprentices, particularly in hairdressing, who complete their qualification in the agreed time by ensuring that learners' progress is monitored closely and that they complete assessments, including those for numeracy, promptly. Ensure that employers are fully aware of

learners' progress and off-the-job training so they can support them with appropriate on-the-job training.

- Improve the quality of college-based apprenticeships by ensuring that professional standards, including those related to health and safety, are fully implemented in college salons and that there are enough clients to develop learners' skills and provide prompt assessment opportunities.
- Ensure that self-assessment accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement and that a clear agenda for improvement is established by sharing the good practice that exists in the delivery of sessions and in learners' progress reviews so that high standards are promoted consistently in health, safety and hygiene practices and learners develop a greater understanding of equality and diversity.

Visual and performing arts

Grade 2

Context

53. The college offers full-time vocational and academic courses in visual and performing arts and music from foundation to advanced level. Of the 490 learners currently enrolled on college-based provision, 409 are aged 16 to 18 and 81 are adults. Approximately 85% of learners study on advanced-level courses, 12% on intermediate and the rest are on foundation-level courses.

Key findings

- Success rates are consistently very high on foundation-level art and design, intermediate-level music and advanced-level music technology. The proportion of learners completing advanced-level art and design has declined to satisfactory as too many leave the fashion and textiles course early. In 2010/11 retention was low on advanced-level performing arts but this year retention has improved. Success rates on AS art are declining and are low.
- Learners on the foundation diploma in art and design and advanced-level graphics make very good progress. The proportion of learners achieving high grades is good on several courses but it is declining on a few courses and is particularly low at AS level. About half the learners who leave their course early do so to take up employment. However, too many learners have left their course as they did not have a detailed understanding of the breadth of technical skills required to be successful. Attendance during inspection was low.
- The standard of learners' work is high. Learners develop a wide range of vocational and personal skills enabling them to produce work that is well researched, thoughtful and executed with flair. At advanced level learners' work demonstrates their personal style. Performing arts learners rehearse effectively. They successfully master characterisation and take responsibility for daily warm ups. Music learners' team-working skills are very good.
- Learners develop very good employability skills through an excellent programme of activities that bring them into contact with professional practice and practitioners. Learners in performing arts benefit from working in a professional environment as members of elite production teams supervising the technical aspects of performances. Others work on community projects including a children's theatre project at Centre Parcs. Learners apply safe working practices.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan and resource lessons well. Learners are actively engaged in their learning and development. Teachers' enthusiasm, professional expertise and vocational knowledge inspire learners to do well. In the best lessons highly effective target setting promotes high standards and learners make very good progress. However, targets sometimes lack sufficient challenge to maximise the progress of more able learners.

- Assessment is rigorous and fair. Learners improve the quality of their work as a result of teachers' timely and detailed written and verbal feedback. However, teachers do not always correct spelling and grammatical errors. Assignments are very relevant and current. For example, a fashion brief enabled learners to explore a current couture design trend to develop and produce their own garments. Music technology learners work on innovative production projects.
- Performing arts and music learners benefit from outstanding resources. They work in a highly professional environment with industry standard equipment. Art and design accommodation is satisfactory with a wide range of specialist equipment and technician support for both two- and three-dimensional work.
- A broad range of courses enables learners to progress from foundation to higher levels and these are supplemented frequently by industry-related enrichment activities. Partnerships on most courses are in the early stages of development. In music there are excellent partnerships with the army musical corps and local musicians who have national recognition.
- Care and support for learners with complex needs are outstanding. A well coordinated team of support assistants, tutors and teachers effectively plan, deliver, and monitor activities that improve learners' skills. Teachers support learners very effectively in lessons. Improved initial guidance, induction and tutorials enable learners to make well informed decisions.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers have high aspirations and an effective strategy that is driving improvement. Staff understand their roles in the process. Observation of teaching and learning accurately identifies areas for improvement. Managers are proactive in ensuring that staff share good practice and complete relevant training.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Stimulating topics are embedded fully and learners are engaged in a wide range of projects that celebrate diversity. A project on homelessness questioned stereotypes and developed learners' empathy by exploring the related issues.
- All staff are involved in the self-assessment process which accurately identifies the strengths and areas for improvement. Learners' views and accurate data inform the process. Quality improvement plans and course reviews are used regularly to monitor and evaluate the quality of learners' experience.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention rates particularly for advanced-level learners by ensuring that prior to enrolment they have an understanding of the breadth of technical skills necessary to complete their courses successfully.
- Develop and share good practice in target setting and the effective delivery of lessons to ensure that all learners make excellent progress and attain high grades.
- Implement current plans to strengthen partnerships, especially in art and design and performing arts, to give learners increased opportunities for the development of their professional practice and experience.

Literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Grade 3

Context

54. The college offers courses to just over 2,500 learners in literacy and numeracy from entry to intermediate level. Most full-time college-based learners take functional skills as part of their studies. A minority take GCSE English and/or mathematics or certificates in adult literacy and/or numeracy. Around 80% of learners following these courses are aged 16 to 18. In addition 169 learners are enrolled on ESOL courses; the majority are adults who study part-time.

Key findings

- Outcomes are satisfactory. In 2010/11 the success rates on functional skills entry-level mathematics and English, and level 1 and 2 English were above the national average. However, success rates at levels 1 and 2 in mathematics were low. Success rates on ESOL courses are satisfactory.
- Retention rates are low on GCSE mathematics and English and on literacy and numeracy courses. In-year retention data show significant improvement. The proportion of learners achieving GCSE grades A* to C in English and mathematics is satisfactory.
- Learners make satisfactory progress in lessons and the standard of their work is appropriate to their level of course. In a minority of lessons learners develop a wide range of literacy skills. For example, in one lesson learners used imaginative character profiles to develop interesting stories. In too many lessons the work is too easy and as a consequence some learners sit around waiting for others to complete their tasks. In a few lessons the work is too difficult for a significant minority and this limits their progress.
- Learners enjoy their lessons and feel safe. Their personal development improves significantly and they grow in confidence in college and in their community. ESOL learners benefit from practising their language skills in a variety of settings, for example, visits to museums and at social events.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons teachers use imaginative and inspiring activities covering relevant topics that engage learners in the development of a wide range of skills including punctuation, grammar and sentence structure. Information and learning technology is often used well to support learning. However, in too many lessons the teacher delivers to the whole class without making adjustments for the different levels of learners' ability and there is an over-reliance on handouts.
- Teachers do not always use learners' diagnostic assessments to plan what will be delivered in order to ensure that learners achieve their qualifications. Attendance during inspection was good. Too many childcare learners are enrolled on a course at a level below their original assessments.

- Learners' individual targets are not precise enough to enable tutors to measure their progress. On several courses learners are set short-term targets to develop specific skills but on others the process merely records completed work.
- The wide range of courses meets learners' needs well. They are delivered by part-and full-time modes of attendance both during the day and in the evening so that learners can access lessons at convenient times around their personal commitments. Topics used to develop skills are very relevant and cover scenarios from everyday life and the workplace including curriculum vitae writing and budgeting skills.
- Personal and welfare support are very effective. Comprehensive assessments are used well to inform support arrangements in and out of the classroom. Many learners have overcome significant barriers to learning. In a minority of lessons teachers do not use the additional support assistant effectively to help learners to engage in the activities.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff teams work well together and use their meetings effectively to share good practice and discuss the development of innovative resources. Teachers benefit from specialist training to support learners with specific learning and/or physical disabilities.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and identifies aspects to improve but is too generous in its grading of the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriate actions have led to improved in-year retention. Arrangements to observe lessons are satisfactory but there is insufficient focus on the impact of teaching on learning and skill development.
- Teachers have a good understanding of equality and diversity through specific training days. Learners' knowledge is enhanced at induction and they are aware of how to report incidents. However, there are too many instances where teachers have not taken naturally occurring opportunities to develop diversity themes when delivering lessons.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that lesson activities are planned more carefully to meet the broad ability range in each group and that all learners are engaged in productive learning at each lesson.
- Develop the use of initial diagnostic assessments to ensure that learners are placed on the right level of course and that learning is planned to meet their specific needs. Ensure that learners have more specific individual targets against which their progress can be reviewed frequently in order to maximise achievement.
- Improve the rigour in the observation of lessons by ensuring that observers can judge the learning that takes place and not just describe the activities being completed, to help improve teaching and learners' progress.

Business (work-based)

Grade 2

Context

55. The college offers a broad range of work-based programmes, from intermediate to higher level, to 453 learners across the country. There are 363 apprentices and 90 learners following NVQs in the workplace. Around three quarters are adults and almost all learners study part-time. Most learners are female and 11% are of minority ethnic heritage. Over the last year there has been a rapid growth in provision, the majority of these new learners are managed by sub-contractors who work across the country.

Key findings

- Success rates for apprentices are outstanding and were significantly above the national average in 2010/11. The vast majority achieve their qualification in the planned time. In-year data indicate that current apprentices are making good progress.
- Learners enjoy their courses and attendance is good. However, too many learners who have good capability are not being encouraged or challenged to achieve their learning goals more rapidly.
- Learners develop good vocational skills and increased confidence. Many learners have been assigned additional responsibilities at work and several have been promoted as a result of their increased occupational skills. For example, a customer service learner now manages her own group of clients and a business administration learner is now responsible for the company's database.
- Learners feel safe and use safe working practices. Employer risk assessments are carried out promptly. Health and safety, and safeguarding, are covered thoroughly during induction. However, not all assessors in the subcontracted provision are asking questions to check and reinforce learners' understanding of safety issues during their regular workplace visits.
- Training and learning are good. Assessors provide very effective individual coaching in the workplace to develop learners' high-level skills. They generate an enthusiasm and commitment to learning. Learners benefit from clear and prompt feedback which enables them to improve.
- Initial assessment is thorough. All learners receive a one-to-one interview and complete an on-line skills test and skills match before they start. This ensures learners are placed on the correct programme and level as well as identifying promptly those who need additional learning support. Learners' progress is closely monitored and assessors respond well to requests for additional help.
- Learners benefit from good short-term action planning. Assessors set learners appropriate targets to complete between visits and check that they understand what needs to be completed and by when. Learners are highly motivated to achieve their short-term targets. However, too many assessors working for subcontractors do not identify additional on-the-job training. Consequently on-

the-job training does not feature sufficiently in the long-term planning of training.

- Guidance and support are good. Assessors know their learners well and support them in their workplace learning. They develop a good rapport with learners and provide flexible and responsive support as required.
- Leadership and management are good. Staff are supported well and they have realistic and challenging performance targets. All staff contribute to the self-assessment process. Staff are motivated and feel involved in the planning and delivery of learning. However, the rapid rise in subcontracted provision has led to inconsistencies in practices.
- The college has formed strong and supportive relationships with its subcontractors. Partners welcome the supportive feedback from the college's quality assurance visits and the training events. The sharing of best practice has not been embedded and many partners are inconsistent in their approach to planning learning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is thorough for college-based apprentices. Learners treat each other with respect and consideration. However, it is promoted less well to learners managed by the subcontractors. Assessors are not asking challenging enough questions to develop learners' knowledge of equality and diversity in the workplace.
- Resources are satisfactory and used effectively to support learning in the college and in the workplace. They include the latest software packages for accounting apprentices. Electronic NVQs have recently been introduced for college-based business administration apprentices. The use of ILT with subcontractors is limited.

What does West Nottinghamshire College need to do to improve further?

- Develop the use of ILT to enhance the learners' experience, particularly on programmes delivered by subcontractors.
- Support subcontractors' assessors to develop progress reviews so that they embed and develop learners understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity by sharing the good practice that exists on college-based programmes.
- Use progress reviews, particularly on provision managed by subcontractors, to capture in detail learners' on-the-job training to help inform the long-term planning of learning.

Information about the inspection

56. Five of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy principal (teaching and learning), 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.
57. 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 college. 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)
West Nottinghamshire College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	Personal and social development
Approx. number of enrolled learners at time of inspection						
Full-time learners	4,292	0	3,125	1,115	52	0
Part-time learners	16,382	165	502	4,454	11,261	2,131
Overall effectiveness	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
Capacity to improve	3					
Outcomes for learners	2	1	2	2	2	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2					
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3					
How well do learners progress?	2					
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2					
How safe do learners feel?	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>	1					
Quality of provision	2	n/a	3	2	2	n/a
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 effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?	1					
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?	2					
Leadership and management	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2					
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?</i>	2					
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2					
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2					
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1					
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3					
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2					

*where applicable to the type of provision

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