

# Northumberland College

## General further education college

Inspection dates		28 January–01 February 2013
Overall effectiveness	<b>This inspection:</b>	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- The senior leadership and staff have improved the quality of learning and outcomes for students while successfully leading the college through a period of great uncertainty.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved markedly across the college. There has been a strong focus on this aspect throughout the college and positive developments can be seen in all areas.
- Retention rates have improved significantly and support a corresponding rise in success rates, which were high in 2011/12. Students make good progress on their course and most move on to employment or higher levels of study.
- Levels of support for students are excellent, which is a key factor in motivating them to succeed and overcome barriers to learning. The courses the college offers meet the needs of students very well and the six week induction period supports them in choosing the most appropriate programme of study.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Small pockets of provision are weak, such as the discrete Foundation Learning programme, and those where performance is not yet high such as the Access to Higher Education provision.
- Some processes have been recently introduced and need to be fully embedded to improve consistency and support the college in moving to the next level.
- The attendance of some students is still too low.
- Students have not fully developed independent learning skills and some rely too much on teachers to manage their targets and learning.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure students can understand and manage their targets and learning more effectively by developing and embedding the recently introduced systems for progress monitoring.
- Improve the discrete provision in Foundation Learning to the same high standard seen for students receiving support when studying in vocational areas.
- Further develop teaching and learning by:
  - improving the consistency of feedback, so that it all reaches the same high levels seen in the strongest areas
  - building on the most effective practice seen in some subjects to support the active promotion of equality and diversity in others.
- Improve outcomes by:
  - making sure the action plans for the small pockets of underperformance, such as the Access to Higher Education provision, are carried out and monitored robustly
  - further developing strategies to improve attendance.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- After a number of years when the overall long-course success rate was relatively static, it rose significantly in 2011/12, by more than 14 percentage points. Whereas in 2010/11 the long-course success rate was below the national average, in 2011/12 it was well above.
- The significant upward trend in success rates is seen across both age groups, with the main contributory factor a major increase in retention rates. There are large increases in success rates across all levels, apart from advanced level for adult students, where the increase is more modest.
- The success rate for adult students at advanced level is an area for improvement. The main cause of weaker performance has been identified as Access to Higher Education provision. Specific improvement measures are in place and are already showing a positive impact on retention.
- Students make good progress in their studies, and achieve challenging targets. Across most subjects students produce work of a high standard and develop good levels of knowledge and skills. This is seen very clearly in art, in the fashion show put on by the students and in their portfolios, which reflect the range of techniques they have mastered.
- Success rates for apprenticeships are in line with rising national averages and have been for a number of years. Plans are in place to increase these to match the significant improvements seen in the success rate of college-based courses; retention this year is much higher than the corresponding period for the previous year. The percentage of apprentices who achieve their qualification within the planned timescale, or earlier, is well above the national rate.
- Success rates for the large numbers of students on functional skills courses in English and mathematics increased at intermediate and foundation level in 2011/12. However, these are not yet high enough and the variations in success rates between different subject areas are too great. In land-based studies the success rate is very high, but in hospitality and catering it is too low.
- Many students achieve additional qualifications, as well as their main qualification, and these are carefully tailored to support them in gaining employment or progressing to higher level qualifications. Enterprise and enrichment activities are also used to help students develop high levels of personal, social and employability skills.

- No achievement gaps are identified related to age, gender or ethnicity. The success rate for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high and better than that of their peers. There are many examples of students overcoming multiple barriers to learning and going on to achieve outcomes they did not think possible at the start of their course.
- The college has sound systems in place to record the progress of students to positive destinations. For example, nearly 80% of students on foundation-level provision moved on to higher levels of study within the college or to employment in 2012, with this figure rising to 100% in some subject areas such as leisure, travel and tourism.
- Students are very appreciative of the extremely high levels of support they receive from their tutors. These help the students in developing positive attitudes to learning, in making progress in their studies and moving on to further study and employment. However, in a number of areas students' attendance is too low.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, which is reflected in the college's improving success rates, which in 2011/12 are good. As a result of a strong focus on raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for all students, the proportion of sessions that are good or better has increased. A highly effective and multi-faceted learning and teaching improvement programme is developing which encourages sharing a range of good and some innovative practice between curriculum areas. Teachers are embracing the strategies and this is improving the experience of students.
- A good proportion of lessons are good or better and teachers have high expectations of their students. In these lessons, students benefit from highly skilled and experienced teachers with credible industry knowledge and practice which students value. Most teachers foster students' independent learning skills through progressively challenging tasks and students participate well and make good progress. However, the level of stretch and challenge and the use of directed challenging questioning, in some subjects, particularly in construction, is under-developed.
- Initial assessment is used well to establish students' starting points and additional needs. Each student has an individual interview to review their progress every six weeks. Individual electronic learning plans are developing that review all aspects of the student's progress and attendance, but teachers have yet to set short-term measurable and time-bound targets to measure progress effectively. Too many students rely on the teacher to supply them with information about their progress; they are not encouraged to take responsibility for this themselves.
- Teachers plan progression routes well with a strong focus on employability. In many subjects, such as health and social care and child care, land based, public services and information and communication technology (ICT), qualifications and units are available as additions to the main programme of study. In other areas, volunteering activities and external trips enhance students' social skills, confidence and knowledge.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is mostly good, offering detailed written comment that helps them to improve their subject skills and spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, in a minority of subjects, feedback from teachers is not always sufficiently developmental for students to make further progress and incorrect spelling and grammar are not routinely corrected.
- Resources to support students are mostly good with well-furnished classrooms providing stimulating learning environments. In construction, aviation and health and social care, high quality learning resources add value to learning. Students on land-based courses benefit significantly from the real working environment of the zoological garden and equine facilities. However, the college has recognised that some resources are not fit for purpose and has well advanced plans for refurbishment.

- The Learning Resource Centre provides a modern, well-resourced and welcoming facility. Students benefit from the adjacent cafe which encourages them into the learning centre to use the resources. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is a developing resource for students.
- All full-time students study functional English and mathematics to improve their skill levels, and these are effectively integrated into most subjects. However, the college has yet to analyse at whole-college level how well students improve these skills from their starting point.
- Initial advice and guidance is very effective. Teachers purposefully use the first six weeks of courses to develop students' skills and induct them into their programme to help them finally to decide that it is the correct programme of study. In addition, students achieve a range of useful qualifications in this time. Teachers provide effective guidance on next steps in learning at the beginning and during the students' course.
- Learning support is highly effective for those students identified with additional learning needs. Well-targeted classroom support enables these students to perform significantly better than their peers. Students with learning disabilities and those who have not succeeded at school gain in confidence, independence and skill. Learning mentors provide particularly effective practical support to help students stay on programme and succeed. However, in some curriculum areas this has yet to improve attendance rates.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good at induction. Some vocational areas promote equality and diversity very well during lessons. In a hospitality foundation-level lesson, the teacher effectively reviewed the luncheon menu, questioning students on its suitability for a range of ethnic and religious groups and also in terms of the range to suit those who do not eat meat and those with specific allergies. In other lessons, teachers fail to use situations as they arise to raise students' awareness and understanding.

**Health, social care and childcare**

**Learning programmes for 16-18**  
**Learning programmes for 19+**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the very high proportion of students who achieve their qualifications. Teachers plan theory sessions very well and use good quality learning resources that develop students' skills and confidence in a wide range of situations. Students acquire very quickly the required knowledge about subjects, including safeguarding and maintaining clients' dignity, and produce very good standards of written work.
- Employers provide practice activities and experiences that increase students' practical skills. All students become highly skilful in recognising the needs of service users. Students develop high standards of communication skills which they use to good effect to discuss complex situations such as issues with service users and management of child behaviour.
- Challenging tasks incorporate active, collaborative, imaginative and reflective learning. Students enjoy their learning and are motivated and enthusiastic. Teachers provide clear written and verbal feedback. However, some feedback lacks sufficient detail for students to improve their performance.
- Teaching and learning in a small minority of lessons are not yet good. Staff are working well on the sharing of best practice and are taking part in staff development to move the department towards a consistent approach. In health and social care, lessons are planned very well and effective questioning supports students in developing higher-order thinking skills.
- Many teachers set challenging learning activities that develop students' knowledge well and encourage them to reflect on their personal and professional development. Teachers utilise the experiences and learning students have gained from the workplace and use probing assessment tasks so that students can draw together their experiences, which clearly enhances their occupational skill development.

- The college has recruited placement officers and assessors in order to ensure a more coordinated approach to supporting learners within the work setting. This has yet to have full impact, but is planned to lead to further rigour in partnership working and ensure more frequent and high quality assessments within the work setting.
- Assessors are extremely knowledgeable and up-to-date in their subject area. They make use of their extensive vocational knowledge and experience to provide relevant advice about future career and training opportunities. All students receive very good initial guidance about their programme which prepares them well for learning and assessment.
- Highly effective initial assessments are used to plan additional learning support, which develops students’ literacy, numeracy and language skills or English and mathematics. Students improve these skills very well, developing confidence, particularly in communication and their written work.
- Teachers set clear targets for students that have clear links to planned learning or assessment. Students understand how they can achieve their targets and are making good progress. Staff encourage students to become more independent in their learning, in particular using an independent learning approach and online learning, websites or written texts to extend their expertise and interests.
- Equality and diversity are integrated exceptionally well into the learning experience. All staff manage students’ behaviour skilfully and show a great awareness of equality and diversity in their teaching. Students regularly discuss equality and diversity topics within all teaching and learning sessions.

<b>Animal care and environmental conservation</b>	
<b>Learning programmes for 16-18</b>	Good
<b>Learning programmes for 19+</b>	

- Strategies to improve outcomes for students have been successful and the number of students completing their course is now high and above national rates for similar colleges. Students gain valuable employability skills and additional qualifications. The numbers entering employment or progressing to a higher-level course are high.
- Teachers are experts in their area and place a strong emphasis on creating a lively and enjoyable learning environment where students build confidence and develop practical skills. In practical lessons teachers use the zoo, equine unit and estate very effectively to develop a wide range and high level of skills. The zoo provides a unique and outstanding facility, where in addition to gaining experience in working with a wide range of animals, students give talks to the general public developing good social and communication skills.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan theory lessons well; they are interactive and include individual, group work and challenging activities. For example, groups of students were asked to develop a key to identify different trees and then critically evaluated each other’s work. In a small minority of lessons activities are not effectively planned to prove sufficient challenge and students do not use time productively.
- Teachers use questioning effectively, which checks understanding, requires students to answer in detail and reinforces learning. Classroom management is good and individual students’ needs are taken into account. Students’ behaviour and attendance are good, which support them in achieving well.
- A combination of good work placements, additional qualifications and work on the college zoo and equine units are very effective in developing employability, independence and practical skills to prepare students for future employment. Students benefit from a number of strong partnerships and collaboration with other zoos and veterinary practices which provide pre-employment opportunities and enrich learning.

- Staff use initial assessment to plan carefully additional learning support which helps students to overcome barriers and make good progress. Students value the very good support they receive. Good links are made with parents and the strong supportive culture enables students to achieve their learning goals.
- Students make good use of ICT and mobile technologies in lessons. Students make use of the VLE but further developments are required to extend independent learning outside the classroom. Students engage in frequent reviews with tutors who carefully consider current performance but students do not take sufficient responsibility for monitoring their own progress.
- Students’ mathematics and English skills are improved through functional skills taught in discrete classes which are well planned and interesting. Students’ assessed work is varied and of a good standard with examples of challenging tasks carried out using the practical facilities, which adds interest. Written feedback makes it clear how the student can achieve a higher grade but is variable in correcting English and spelling.
- A wide range of programmes is offered to students to suit individual needs. Inspectors found examples of aspects of equality and diversity being provided through the curriculum. However, their promotion requires more coordination and planning across the teams.

<b>Building and construction</b> <b>Learning programmes for 16-18</b> <b>Learning programmes for 19+</b> <b>Apprenticeships</b>	Good
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- Teaching is well planned in both theory and practical sessions and students progress and achieve well. Teachers set high expectations and provide effective support to students who develop good practical skills to improve their employability. A high proportion of students make better than planned progress. For example, one group of adult students completed a plastering qualification within half the allocated time.
- Teachers build effectively on previously developed skills and set challenging tasks which further enhance students’ competencies. Teachers use questioning effectively to develop concepts and reinforce previous learning. However, in a majority of theory lessons there is insufficient targeted questioning of students to check understanding and to measure individual progress.
- Resources are good across all courses which support students’ practical skills development. The quality of equipment often exceeds the requirement for the qualification. For example, in the brickwork workshop three touch screen monitors promote independent study and develop students’ research skills. However, insufficient use is made of information learning technology to stimulate students’ interest.
- The promotion of health and safety is very good. Staff effectively challenge unsafe working practices with students and employers. Employers’ training further enhances students’ good knowledge and understanding. Apprentices working for a local authority attend a monthly learners’ forum in which health and safety training is given high priority.
- Employer engagement is very good. The college works effectively with employers to provide additional training to students to improve their skills. Apprentice bricklayers benefit from a plastering course at the college to further develop their skills and knowledge in repair and maintenance techniques.
- Initial assessment is thorough and ensures that students who need additional support receive extra mentoring in lessons and in the workplace. Learning support assistants and assessors work very closely with these students and their teachers in ensuring that students are confident, keep up with studies and succeed.
- Assessment is rigorous, meaningful and well developed for all students. Verbal and written feedback following assessment is constructive and ensures students understand the progress they are making and how to improve. Effective questioning checks apprentices’ understanding at

relevant stages and results in them clearly understanding what skills and knowledge they need to improve.

- The process for reviewing students' progress requires improvement. Students who are not making sufficient progress are appropriately challenged. However, target-setting within tutorials and pastoral reviews is inconsistent and does not sufficiently focus on improving students' attendance and punctuality. Workplace reviews are not always completed in a timely manner.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Tasks extend students' knowledge and understanding well. In an English session, foundation-level students successfully completed an extension exercise in homophones. However, the marking of students' portfolios and other written work to correct spelling and grammatical errors is weak.
- Induction provides students with a good understanding of their programme and what is expected of them. Students receive timely information on careers advice and opportunities within the construction industry and are coached in interview skills. Employers are encouraged to visit the college, which resulted in four brickwork students gaining an apprenticeship in 2012.
- Equality and diversity are promoted appropriately through college policies and poster displays; students with a physical disability are well supported. A painting and decorating student was provided with support by a signer and successfully completed the programme. However, equality and diversity are not reinforced sufficiently with students, and their employers, particularly in teaching and learning sessions and student progress reviews.

## Information and communication technology

### Learning programmes for 16-18

### Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the high success rates for students across the department. In the well planned lessons activities engage students and enable them to develop good practical ICT skills and knowledge that prepares them well for assessment. In the less effective lessons teachers do not use questioning skilfully to help students extend their knowledge and test understanding.
- Students make good progress on their programmes and gain a range of skills. For example, in one lesson students were evaluating various websites to identify good and poor features of web design. Students were encouraged to share their findings with each other through the use of a discussion forum through the VLE. However, the VLE is not always used effectively to develop students' independent learning skills. Specialist resources to support technical skills development are very good and this enables students to gain vendor specific qualifications that are of industry standard.
- Support for students is excellent. Students benefit from the high expectations and care they receive from enthusiastic and supportive teachers. Staff demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of the needs of their students and provide support both in and outside lessons. However, poor attendance is an issue for some students; improvement strategies are in place.
- Effective initial assessment identifies any specific support needs to ensure support is quickly planned to meet individual needs. Students' individual learning plans are monitored regularly to assess their progress against targets. If students are identified as being at risk of not meeting targets effective action is taken to remedy this.
- Assessment is very thorough and rigorous. Assessment tasks are clear, well written, vocationally contextualised and meet awarding body criteria. Assignment briefs are internally verified and provide useful and clear actions for improvement.
- Teachers provide regular verbal feedback to students to help them make good progress. In the better written feedback, comments are carefully structured and detailed. This helps students understand what they need to do to improve. However, this is not consistent across the department and in the weaker feedback, comments are too general and do not provide students

with constructive, useful guidance on how to improve. Spelling and punctuation are not always corrected.

- Students understand the importance of improving their English and mathematics to help them succeed and to progress. Teaching and learning activities help develop their mathematics, communication and writing skills. For example, in developing enterprise skills, students presented their business plan to a panel of judges; the activity required them to work out their profit and start up costs and create market-research questionnaires.
- Advice and guidance are good and this helps students plan well for progression. Their programmes are coherently planned to prepare them for higher education, further study or employment. Students are provided with a range of guidance including preparation for completing higher education (UCAS) applications, student finance and careers advice.
- In lessons the use of group work helps foster good relations between students and encourages them to support one another. Equality and diversity are promoted well through activities, assignments and themed events across the college.

**Independent living and leisure skills**

**Learning programmes for 14-16**  
**Learning programmes for 16-18**  
**Learning programmes for 19+**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. There are strong outcomes in this area but this masks some very distinct variability between different components within the provision. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who receive additional learning support and who are studying vocational programmes, provision is good. For students aged 14 to 16 on the Local Education Area Project (LEAP) it is good. For students studying on the discrete Foundation Learning programme it is inadequate.
- Students studying on vocational programmes and who are in receipt of additional learning support and the 14- to 16-year-old students on the LEAP programme, benefit from the high expectations placed upon them. This results in high success rates, good attendance and improved behaviour. The experience of students on discrete Foundation Learning programmes is much less effective.
- Students in receipt of additional learning support and on the LEAP programme benefit from good teaching. Highly structured sessions provide short, focussed activities which change regularly and are progressive, enabling skills and knowledge to be extended. Teachers effectively use a range of multi-sensory approaches. While there are pockets of very effective teaching within the discrete Foundation Learning provision, the majority of students experience teaching which requires improvement or is inadequate.
- Students in receipt of additional learning support on vocational programmes, benefit from thorough initial assessment that informs planning for learning. Support staff know their students well and use this knowledge to promote increased independence in their learning. Teachers keep students well informed about their assessment schedule and they receive high quality feedback that helps them to improve their work.
- Very effective multi-agency partnership working ensures students on the LEAP programme receive wide ranging effective assessments and strong monitoring of their progress. Six-weekly reviews are detailed and swift action is taken if student progress starts to slip. In discrete Foundation Learning provision the majority of students do not benefit from effective, robust regular assessment to ensure good progress. Tutorials for students on discrete Foundation Learning provision are weak for the majority of students.
- Development of English, mathematics and functional skills is core to all programmes. The college places a strong emphasise of the acquisition of these skills as they are seen as vital to



success and progression. These skills are developed well using vocational and real-life contexts, which engage students. Once acquired, the skills are practised in preparation for exams.

- Effective advice and guidance results in students being placed on programmes where they succeed. Most students achieve good progression to higher qualifications or employment. In addition to achieving mathematics, English and other qualifications while attending college, some LEAP students return to school to achieve GCSEs. The importance of these qualifications for their future career and higher education aspirations is clearly understood.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is satisfactory. In some lessons, positive promotion of equality and diversity is achieved through careful selection of resources, topics and activities, for example, the experience of women within different cultures. However, some teachers miss naturally occurring opportunities.
- Students feel safe and know where to seek support. Teachers and student learning mentors appropriately challenge students' attitudes, ideas and behaviours. Inclusion is a high priority for the college.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

**Good**

- Since the last inspection the college has undergone a period of great uncertainty, including a failed merger and a series of interim principals, nevertheless, senior managers with the support of the whole staff have significantly improved outcomes for students. A recently appointed chair of governors and a newly appointed principal have communicated a clear vision and strategic direction for the college that has inspired and motivated staff and students. Strategic priorities are clearly focussed on improving teaching, learning and assessment, partnership building and maintaining financial stability. The principal is energetic, visible and highly effective in communicating his 'tough but tender' philosophy of leadership and education.
- Governors, who have considerable expertise and a good range of skills, hold senior leaders to account and set demanding targets to raise standards. As a result they are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the college's academic and financial performance. A governor is linked to each faculty and their visibility has motivated staff and helped to communicate governors' support for the college's journey to become outstanding.
- Leaders and managers have played a key role in the improvements in teaching and learning. The observation of learning and teaching strategy and its application is comprehensive. The college use external consultants to moderate and give an independent view on the process. However, inspectors found that a small proportion of the college observations did not sufficiently focus on learning and the progress students made in lessons and some of the grades awarded were inflated. Teachers who do not meet the required standard of good in their observations receive a wide range of effective training and coaching to improve. The identification and provision of continuing professional development needs are very well managed and well regarded by staff.
- Performance-management processes are rigorous, for staff and subject areas. Course performance is measured against challenging targets for retention, achievement and the progress rates of students. While this has improved performance, managers acknowledge that further progress can be made. Student progress is monitored by a recently introduced electronic system.
- Self-assessment arrangements are comprehensive and evaluations are based on a wide range of suitable and relevant evidence, including students' views. Most judgements are accurate. The quality of self-assessment at course and sector subject level is robust; however, the quality improvement plan for leadership and management lacks detail. The college produces a wealth of useful data to inform self-evaluation and quality assurance. This year a nominated governor has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of self-assessment validation panels.
- The college curriculum offer meets the needs and interests of its region and local community well; provision is wide ranging, and offers progression from one level to another and onto

further study or employment. The Pathfinder project has a strategic focus on developing partnerships that are linked to regional and national priorities. The college has many existing productive and innovative partnerships, for example, in sport and in the co-location of a zoo and a veterinary practice at Kirkley Hall. The college places an increasing focus on developing employability skills. Employers have contributed to course design and some apprenticeships are tailored to meet specific employer needs.

- A good equality scheme, well-devised objectives and detailed action plan support the college's ambition for an inclusive community to be achieved through effective promotion and management of equality and diversity. A newly formed equality committee further strengthens the college's approach. However, teaching in some subjects does not sufficiently promote students' understanding of equality issues. Incidents and complaints are closely monitored for equality issues and bullying is not tolerated.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. All staff complete mandatory training and arrangements to ensure the well-being of students are good. The safeguarding team manager works closely with the designated governor and has good links to the local authority and external agencies. A mentor team works actively to support students who have either self-reported or have been referred as needing safeguarding support and/or advice.
- Health and safety monitoring and reporting to managers and governors is thorough. The college has received capital funds to refurbish two sites. This will allow long overdue repairs and new buildings to rectify serious weaknesses in some teaching accommodation and toilet facilities. The college's VLE is under-developed.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**

<b>Northumberland College</b>					
<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	<b>14-16 Learning programmes</b>	<b>16-18 Learning programmes</b>	<b>19+ Learning programmes</b>	<b>Apprenticeships</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	2	2	2	2	2
<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	2	2	2	2	2
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	2	2	2	2	2

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Health and social care</b>	2
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	2
<b>Animal care and veterinary science</b>	2
<b>Environmental conservation</b>	2
<b>Building services</b>	2
<b>ICT for practitioners</b>	2
<b>ICT for users</b>	2

<b>Independent living and leisure skills</b>	3
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## Provider details

<b>Northumberland College</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 1,572
	Part-time:4,317
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Stuart Cutforth
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	October 2009
<b>Website address</b>	www.northumberland.ac.uk

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	177	22	482	84	547	230	1	0
<b>Part-time</b>	90	145	171	421	69	344	1	18
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	199	223	67	225	0	4		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	152							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	22							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	465							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sports Legacies</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

Northumberland is the most sparsely populated county in England, with nearly half the population of 316,300 living in rural areas. The unemployment rate, at 11.2%, is just below the national and regional average; the percentage of workers who are self-employed is higher than the national and regional average. The college's main campus is in Ashington; it also has sites in Berwick, Hexham and Kirkley Hall and specialist construction facilities at Alnwick and Prudhoe. Some of the students who attend the college come from areas which are in the top 10% of the most deprived wards nationally and around 45% of adults and 73% of students aged 16 to 18 have no level 2 qualifications on entry.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Heather Barnett HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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