

# Swindon College

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		25 February-1 March 2013
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Outstanding-1</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is outstanding because:

- A consistently high proportion of learners gain their intended qualification and make very good progress whilst at college. Learners enjoy coming to college and are enthusiastic about their learning.
- The standard of learners' work is very good and sometimes outstanding. Learners gain very good skills, knowledge and understanding and can apply these well to work or further study.
- The college is highly effective in raising learners' aspirations and attainment. When they have completed their courses, almost all learners progress to further learning at a higher level or to employment.
- Learners develop excellent personal, social and employability skills. They are self-assured, confident and courteous and well prepared for their lives beyond college.
- Learners are given outstanding academic and personal support. It is highly structured and coordinated well; teachers and support staff are passionate about, and successful at, helping learners overcome barriers to progress, and enabling them to learn.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and provide well-planned, stimulating lessons and highly beneficial feedback to develop learners' skills and knowledge.
- The management and delivery of the college's work-based learning provision are excellent. Learners' programmes are planned and coordinated highly effectively to ensure that learners make very good progress.
- Leadership and management of the college are outstanding. Leaders and managers have successfully created a culture of respect and ambition, and have improved the quality of the college's provision in a comparatively short time.
- Staff throughout the college contribute to a culture in which learners take absolute priority. They have an unrelenting determination that each learner should achieve his or her best.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that English and mathematical skills are fully integrated across the curriculum in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects.
- Ensure that the current programme to drive up the standards of teaching and learning is maintained effectively in order to further increase the proportion of outstanding practice.
- Raise standards even further by identifying where learners could make better progress and taking action to provide additional stretch and challenge for learners.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcomes for learners are outstanding. The proportion of classroom and work-based learners who achieve their intended qualification has been consistently high over recent years and across almost all subject areas offered by the college. In 2011/12 just over 85% of students on long classroom-based courses were successful. In work-based learning, the large majority of learners completed their apprenticeships within the time planned for them, as did most learners studying for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace.</li> <li>▪ The standard of learners' work is at least good, and often better. Learners become confident in using vocational skills and in applying their learning to their chosen subjects. For example, the college's eye-catching posters promoting equality and diversity have been designed by graphics students to a high professional standard; in a media make-up lesson, learners made skilful use of theatrical make-up to create striking images to portray characters from fairy stories for stage performances; learners in a motor vehicle workshop explained confidently how they were testing advance braking systems and their purpose.</li> <li>▪ Learners enjoy their courses and most make very good progress in lessons and in their attainment. They are punctual to lessons and attendance is generally good. Managers and staff have been particularly successful in fostering a culture of mutual respect between learners and their teachers. Learners are confident, self-assured and courteous, and are enthusiastic about their learning. They value highly the excellent support provided by the college. The college's student ambassadors speak articulately and with evident pride about the college and the provision it offers. Teachers and tutors are highly successful in helping learners overcome barriers to progress, and in motivating them to study and use their time at college productively.</li> <li>▪ Managers and staff have high expectations of learners and are ambitious for their success at college and beyond. The proportion of learners that progress to higher levels of study or to employment is very high. The college keeps very careful and up-to-date records of learners' plans for the future and tutors are skilled in raising learners' aspirations and encouraging their ambition. Learners who, hitherto, had not dared to consider higher education have been successful in their applications to university and are excited about their plans for future study. This ambition extends to students of the future; those currently at primary school. Learners on courses in early years and playwork have written a charming story book for these younger learners to tell them about the exciting learning and work opportunities that await them when they grow up.</li> <li>▪ Learners develop excellent personal, social and employability skills. The college makes particularly effective use of work experience and community projects to improve learners' understanding of work demands and to develop their broader skills. For example, learners on plumbing courses have recently refurbished the toilets at a local sports club. In the process they</li> </ul>	

have developed a wide range of planning, team-working and organisational skills in addition to practising their plumbing skills and contributing to their local community.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment at the college are outstanding and lead to excellent outcomes for learners. While this reflects a very good experience for learners in the classroom, the college's exceptional support and care systems also ensure that the great majority of learners happily start on the right course and then stay, with a positive attitude towards succeeding. Across the college, staff show a remarkable enthusiasm and desire to ensure their learners succeed in their chosen qualification; learners respond well to this attitude.
- The very large majority of teaching and learning is consistently good or better, with much that is outstanding. Following significant staff development, and with encouragement by leaders and managers, teachers now confidently use a variety of techniques to enthuse their learners and encourage mature learning. Lively practical examples range from following a rabbit on its journey through nursery provision to carrying out searches for improvised explosive devices on public service courses. A pragmatic approach to lesson planning, linking a scheme of work with the essentials for a particular lesson, encourages teachers be innovative and improvise, whilst ensuring that the basics are still covered. Teachers use their extensive vocational expertise well to aid the development of employment related skills.
- Planning for individual learners' needs is very good. Initial assessment, not only of literacy and numeracy but also of social needs, is carried out promptly and the results are used well by staff to guide their teaching and support activities. In many areas teachers and tutors challenge learners to extend their competence or knowledge, although in a few instances there is room for further stretch to higher achievement.
- The college uses its resources very well to aid learning. Despite a continuing disparity in the quality of the buildings across the campus, staff make the most of their teaching areas and show imagination in procuring resources, for instance with laser equipment in the very professionally presented beauty salons and robots in engineering areas. Learning technology is now available in nearly all classrooms and is increasingly, although inconsistently, used in imaginative ways to aid learning. The college's existing virtual learning environment provides a basic aid to learning in many areas; the newly developed one and the increasing enthusiasm and expertise of staff in its use are offering greater potential.
- Information on learners is well recorded and used effectively to monitor and improve learning. Relatively new electronic learning plans are being widely used by learners and staff to help progress. Although in many cases the formal targets set are too simplistic, more helpful actions are properly noted in the more detailed contacts log.
- Regular and thorough assessment helps learners to progress and understand what they need to do next. A clear assessment plan for longer courses aids learners and, by sharing it with their parents and guardians, the college encourages others to take an interest in their progress. Very clear guidance for staff on literacy includes useful advice on correcting grammar and spelling in assignments and class and this approach is now being implemented well in many subject areas.
- Learners are given appropriate assistance in English and mathematics to achieve their learning goals. Individual literacy and numeracy support, in and out of the classroom, is good. However, most functional skills courses and the small GCSE mathematics provision are not yet being provided to the same standard as the college's main qualifications, for instance with insufficient linking of the delivery of functional skills to vocational areas.
- Information, advice and support are outstanding and play a very significant part in ensuring that outcomes, and teaching and learning are also outstanding. The many well-resourced, well-structured and planned elements of the college care system link very effectively to provide a seamless support system that helps learners make good progress or guides them if personal circumstances intervene to hinder their learning. Many learners receive help and attention long before they arrive at college, with a high level of personal care and progress monitoring

continuing throughout their course. Work with learners facing challenging circumstances is carefully managed, with exceptional communication ensuring that relevant staff are quick to intervene to help those learners whenever necessary.

- Work with other support agencies is exceptional; this is not only through routine meetings between managers, but by the employment of specialists to work directly with individual learners. The college has its own carefully considered support initiatives from, for example, the extensive work of a large dedicated team working with local schools and institutions to the sensitively equipped room where specialist staff aim at 'solutions' for youngsters with anger management problems.
- Equality of opportunity and diversity is well promoted in the majority of courses. As well as the more usual elements, such as celebrating differing festivals and cultures, a high level of mature debate takes place on topics ranging from the searching of women in religious dress on security related courses to care learners' discussions about treatment of the elderly. Mutual respect amongst learners, reflecting the approaches and attitudes of staff, reduces the potential for bullying and harassment.

## Health and social care

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

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and lead to excellent outcomes for learners. Teachers plan lessons very well and use an extensive range of activities and approaches to motivate learners, inspire them to make very good progress, produce work of a high standard and achieve challenging learning goals and career aspirations. They make highly effective use of good vocational knowledge and experience to provide stimulating lessons. These high quality lessons enable learners to develop good knowledge, skills and understanding of complex theoretical concepts and to apply these to health and social care settings.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed to enabling learners to achieve. In lessons, they facilitate excellent discussions in which learners analyse and evaluate research, evidence and case studies to develop their understanding. One lively session included high quality debate on euthanasia, during which learners demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding this difficult topic.
- Tutorial support is outstanding. Tutors know their learners very well and work in partnership with them to set challenging targets. They monitor progress each week to ensure learners' achievement and progression are assured. They make excellent use of learners' aspirations to encourage learners to aim for higher achievement throughout their studies, and particularly when their motivation or commitment dips. Course tutors and student experience managers work together very effectively to design and implement pastoral and educational packages of support that enable vulnerable learners, and those at risk of leaving, to remain on programme and succeed. This exceptional support is balanced with clear boundaries and expectations of learners, the use of good action plans, and disciplinary procedures if needed.
- Teachers make excellent use of assessment, challenging learners to improve the standard of their work and achieve higher grades wherever possible. They give learners detailed, regular feedback so that learners understand what they have completed well and what they need to do to improve. They make excellent use of small group 'learning huddles' when learners ask for additional help. These enable learners to achieve high standards in their work and assignments. However, the results of this support are not fully recorded on the college's electronic progress tracking system.
- Learners develop very good additional employability, personal and social skills through well-designed lesson activities, a well-planned programme of work placements, guest speakers and other stimulating activities. Equality and diversity are embedded securely in the learners'

curriculum. Subject teachers provide excellent information and advice on further study and careers in healthcare. Learners make very effective use of this to identify higher education opportunities, apply for jobs and in interviews.

- In some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to develop learners’ English skills. Most identify and correct spelling and grammatical errors in assignment work, but this is not done consistently by all staff. In a small minority of lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to reinforcing the pronunciation and spelling of complex medical terminology.
- Learners make good progress in their study skills sessions. However, a few sessions were cancelled for some learners during a period of staff absence. Although tutors worked hard to support these learners, several had to resubmit initial assignment work because they did not have the study skills they needed to succeed. These learners are now receiving additional support which they value highly and which has enabled them to catch up the work they missed.

<b>Public services</b>	Outstanding
<b>Learning programmes for 16-18</b>	
<b>Learning programmes for 19+</b>	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and make a significant contribution to the outstanding outcomes for learners. The public services staff team shares a clear and ambitious vision of high standards and success for all learners. Teachers and managers have high aspirations for all learners. This creates a culture of excellence and success, and results in high standards of work and achievement.
- Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly and ensure that all learners are inspired and remain fully engaged in learning activities. They make excellent use of their highly valuable experience to create fascinating practical lessons, for example showing learners the correct procedure and sequence for searching vehicles and their occupants. Teachers make sure learners appreciate the importance of giving the public clear information and instructions to gain their compliance with certain tasks, such as stopping and questioning people suspected of carrying weapons or drugs. They give very good attention to making sure learners understand safe working practices.
- Teachers are highly skilled at bringing learning to life through well-crafted reference to current affairs, politics and world events. They use a very wide range of teaching methods to create rich learning environments in both classrooms and outdoor settings. This includes role play, group exercises, quizzes and debates. Teachers give very good attention to developing learners’ leadership and teamwork skills. Individual coaching is very supportive and highly effective.
- In lessons, learners demonstrate a good understanding of the roles and functions of the various public service organisations. Examples include the Crown Prosecution Service making decisions to prosecute suspects and the deployment of military support in Mali. Learners’ written work is of a high standard and their behaviour and attitude to practical exercises are mature and appropriate. In particular, learners understand the importance of personal accountability and responsibility in the delivery of high quality services to the public.
- Assessment arrangements are fair and precise. Initial assessment is thorough and is used well to agree individual learning targets which are kept under regular and frequent review. Teachers make sure learners understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. Teachers have a very good understanding of learners’ individual needs and interests and ensure lessons stimulate all learners.
- Support for learners is outstanding. Teachers make sure they carefully plan support arrangements for all learners. They identify support needs very early, for example by attending transition meetings at schools. They are sensitive and very effective in managing information about learners and the challenges some of them may face. Case studies show how learners are

encouraged to overcome barriers, build self-confidence and require less support as they realise the high levels of progress they are making.

- Teachers correct grammar in learners’ written work but English, mathematics and functional skills are not fully integrated into lessons. Teachers make very good use of technology to deliver lessons and to help learners track their progress. Lessons are enriched through very good use of edited video to illustrate key learning points, such as how police use a variety of leadership styles and skills to protect the public from a dangerous offender brandishing a machete in a busy street.
- The college provides learners with excellent advice and guidance at all stages in their course. Recruitment and induction arrangements are highly valued by learners. Teachers help learners to identify future job roles and career interests and then offer personalised support and coaching to help them make firm decisions and applications for jobs. Learners benefit from additional qualifications in first aid and community volunteering, but the range of qualifications available is too narrow.
- Equality and diversity are firmly embedded within the public services curriculum and learners understand and appreciate how important these are when serving the public. For example, learners are aware of the recommendations of the Macpherson Report and the new objectives of the Police College. Intermediate learners understand the distinction between racially aggravated and racially motivated offences.

<p><b>Building and construction</b></p> <p><b>Apprenticeships</b></p> <p><b>Other work based learning</b></p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment on work-based programmes in building services and construction skills are outstanding. Apprentices make excellent progress and a high, and improving, proportion gain their intermediate and advanced level apprentices within the time planned for them, as do almost all learners doing NVQs in the workplace. Teachers, assessors and support staff are passionate and enthusiastic and use their extensive expertise to inspire and motivate apprentices to very high standards of work and progress. Staff set high standards and expectations for learners’ behaviour and application and are successful in establishing a culture of mutual respect.
- The management of apprentices’ learning is outstanding. Managers and staff plan learners’ apprenticeship programmes exceptionally well. They work with employers very effectively to engage their support and enable learning. On-the-job activities are closely aligned with off-the-job training at college. Staff assess apprentices’ personal learning and thinking skills and use them well to prepare plans for their development and improvement.
- Excellent communication between teachers, work-based assessors, training coordinators and employers ensures all apprentices are set clear and challenging targets for their subject and personal skills. They review apprentices’ progress and learning plans regularly in the workplace and at college and use these well to enable apprentices to develop high levels of technical competence and very good employability skills.
- Support for individual learners is outstanding. Teaching and support staff identify additional support needs promptly and accurately and use effective strategies to ensure that any barriers to success are overcome. This year the college has employed a specialist apprenticeship student experience manager whose role is to help apprentices overcome personal, social or financial difficulties which may affect their learning and employment. This has been highly successful in retaining learners and enabling them to succeed.
- Apprentices develop strong, professional relationships with their teachers and training coordinators who provide excellent support to develop apprentices’ very good planning, practical

and reflection skills. It ensures that they can carry out complex tasks successfully and develop their skills further. For example, a plumbing apprentice demonstrated very neat pipework when installing a hot water cylinder and shower pump and was able to describe clearly what he had done well and how he could improve.

- Assessment in the workplace and off-the-job training is very effectively planned and managed, and well understood by learners. It is used well to plan what apprentices need to do to improve and make further progress. Assessors use very good questioning to check learning and understanding, and give excellent feedback to apprentices. Their workplace assessment is accurate, thorough and involves employers particularly effectively. In one assessment, an employer set a realistic time for his apprentice to fit ironmongery to an internal door and was then involved in judging its quality.
- The college provides very good additional activities to enrich apprentices' learning. Trips to construction suppliers extend their understanding of industry products and practices. Participation in regional and national competitions and contributions to community projects reinforce their skills. In one example, five apprentices led a team of full time students in redecorating a local church hall. Liaison with the churchwarden developed apprentices' planning, leadership, teamwork and communication skills in addition to their construction skills. These activities contribute successfully to developing apprentices' very good personal, social and employability skills and improving their effectiveness at work.
- Teachers are well qualified and use their good industry knowledge to reinforce learning. Their college-based lessons are good. Apprentices work purposefully and adopt good health and safety practices. In a few lessons, however, teachers make insufficient use of verbal questioning to check or extend apprentices' understanding.
- Although staff use progress reviews well to reinforce apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity, teachers do not always include these topics sufficiently in lessons. Women and learners from minority groups are currently under represented on construction programmes.
- Apprentices value the support offered by their teachers and assessors in helping them to improve their English skills and use of construction terminology. They mark written work carefully and routinely correct spelling and grammatical errors. However, apprentices are not set targets to achieve English and mathematics qualifications above those normally expected as part of their frameworks.

**Hospitality and catering**

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

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, which is reflected in the exceptionally high and consistent proportion of learners who gain their intended qualification. Learners also benefit from outstanding support that enables them to make very good progress through their qualification and beyond. Learners enjoy their time at college.
- Learning is lively and interesting. Teachers have high expectations that motivate learners to extend their learning. For example, in one practical lesson foundation learners were set a challenging 'Masterchef' task to prepare a dish of their choice from a selection of ingredients. All demonstrated creativity and knowledge in the planning and execution of the dish to produce inventive and appetising results. The teacher made very good use of peer review to choose the winner.
- Staff are highly skilled and, as a result of excellent lesson planning, learners make outstanding progress. Teachers regularly update their skills and knowledge of industry using productive employer links and professional development. For example, staff spend time working in local hospitality and catering businesses to keep them abreast of current trends. Chefs from industry

run specialist evening services with learners to help develop their understanding of real work environments.

- Learners develop very good skills and display high levels of creativity. Individual learners are inspired by teachers’ knowledge and awareness of industry trends and explore a wide range of inventive and up-to-date cooking techniques. As a result, advanced learners become skilled in the use of modern presentation and cooking styles in their food preparation.
- Assessment is very well planned. Formative assessments help learners to develop skills appropriately and learners are clear about how well they are doing and what they must do to achieve. Teachers and tutors set clear targets to help learners improve their grades in practical tests. Learners’ portfolios give clear information on their progress and include extensive use of photographic and other visual evidence to help capture learners’ work.
- Feedback to learners is outstanding. Teachers’ feedback is clear and motivating. Learners are excellent at assessing their own work, and teachers make particularly good use of this and of peer reviews, to help learners progress and take action themselves to improve. Advanced level learners help supervise intermediate and foundation learners in the restaurant and provide these learners with good, constructive feedback at the end of sessions. As a result of the feedback they receive, learners regularly challenge themselves by suggesting creative alternatives to dishes in order to achieve higher grades.
- The college provides good resources, including visits, trips and competitions, to enhance learning. Learners are inspired by the range of internal and external competitions in which they participate, and trips and visits are used skilfully to motivate learners to high levels of achievement. Internships in the United States, as well as opportunities through work experience, provide learners with good ideas and opportunities for their future careers.
- Tutors and teachers give learners outstanding support to develop their confidence, build skills and help them progress. They set learners challenging personal targets to help them improve their skills and knowledge and have high expectations of attendance and punctuality that prepare them well for their future careers.
- The college provides excellent advice and guidance for learners. It plans induction and initial assessment well, to ensure learners are on the most appropriate programme for their needs and aspirations. Learners are highly motivated and many overcome barriers to learning to progress to higher levels of study and employment.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity very effectively in lessons and through a range of activities, both within and outside the college. For example, learners take part in promotions of healthy food and diets to the wider college. They accompany staff into schools and the local community to help with demonstrations. This gives them a broader understanding of the different economic backgrounds of the local area and a chance to apply their understanding.

<p><b>Foundation English</b></p> <p><b>Learning programmes for 16-18</b></p> <p><b>Learning programmes for 19+</b></p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the good outcomes for learners. On the majority of courses, most learners gain their intended qualification. However, only a minority of learners on functional skills at level 2 achieve the award. The college has clear plans for rectifying this and early indications from in-year data show a significant improvement in learners’ achievements at this level. Learners’ progress in lessons is good. All learners are making at least the progress expected of them and many are making considerably greater progress, working above the standard expected for their stage and level of programme.
- Teachers have high levels of commitment, care and enthusiasm and use these well in individual and group work. They engage and motivate learners in lessons and create a productive



atmosphere for learning. The excellent additional learning support provided by staff is also very effective in helping learners achieve their learning goals. All learners are enthusiastic about their studies at the college and feel particularly well supported. They appreciate the availability of staff and are confident about finding the help they need, both inside and outside the classroom.

- In the better lessons, teachers use their skills and expertise to plan and teach innovative lessons with activities that meet learners’ needs and build upon their strengths and interests to maximise their progress. In a lesson with construction learners, the teacher made excellent use of learners’ interests in different football teams and learning technology, complete with suitable applause, to review and improve learners’ use of tenses in sentences. Entertaining use of learning technology added fun to work on apostrophes in another lesson. The use of sherbet lemon sweets inspired learners to use all their senses to explore the use of adjectives and extend their vocabulary. As well as motivating learners, these activities build their confidence and help foster a culture of mutual respect.
- Teachers carry out thorough and detailed initial assessments of all learners and use these to set individualised targets for learners’ literacy, personal and social skills. Lessons are planned carefully to develop these skills. For example, in a community literacy class the teacher’s choice of literature for a reading activity provided an excellent framework for learners to build their confidence through team work. In adult literacy courses, teachers make skilful use of challenging learning targets to help learners make good progress. Teachers negotiate and review these targets regularly so that learners understand clearly the progress they are making. However, functional skills lessons make insufficiently effective use of measurable learning targets to provide stretch and challenge for learners.
- In most lessons teachers use good questioning techniques to assess learners and give them helpful verbal reinforcement of learning. They make very good use of their experience to reinforce the link between lesson content and assessment and to give learners relevant tips on examinations to ensure each learner performs at their best in literacy summative assessments. However, the written feedback on learners’ assessed work does not always provide sufficient information to help learners understand what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.
- Equality and diversity are promoted effectively through good collaborative work, high levels of mutual respect and teaching methods that foster good working relationships between staff and learners. Teachers also make effective use of key dates for events and festivals to develop learners’ skill and promote and celebrate equality and diversity.

<b>Business studies</b>	
<b>Learning programmes for 16-18</b> <b>Learning programmes for 19+</b>	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect the high proportion of learners who achieve their intended qualifications. Learners develop good business skills and knowledge. They talk knowledgeably and confidently about their learning and how it will benefit them in the future. They enjoy their learning, make good progress through their qualification and produce work to a good or better standard. The vast majority of learners progress to higher level qualifications or employment.
- Teachers make very good use of group activities, presentations and involvement in college projects, such as organising the fashion show or participating in running the college shop to develop learners’ employability skills such as confidence, team working and communication. They make good use of practical activities to promote equality and diversity, demonstrate key learning points and encourage wider discussion. The promotion of equality and diversity is well established within business courses.

- Most lessons are well structured and learning strategies encourage active participation from learners. Teachers complete relevant industry updating each year, which they use well to link theory to professional practice in lessons. In the better lessons, teachers engage learners in stimulating activities, such as the enterprise challenge to use £10.00 profitably, and which promotes wider interest in the subject. However, tasks and activities do not always challenge more able learners sufficiently, particularly at advanced level.
- Teachers generally make good use of learning technologies to support learning, using video clips well to demonstrate learning points and promote effective discussion. The virtual learning environment is well resourced and used by learners during lessons and for catching up missed work and revision. However, in some lessons, teachers do not make sufficiently creative use of interactive whiteboards to extend learning.
- Staff use innovative approaches to increase work experience opportunities. This was particularly effective when setting up a team challenge with the local market and helped learners gain valuable experience of real business environments. Staff links with local employers are good and used well to enable learners to gain valuable vocational experience.
- The college provides exceptionally effective academic and pastoral support for learners, intervening promptly when necessary to enable them to make good progress. Learners with additional learning needs are given prompt and well-structured support which enables them to contribute more effectively in lessons, complete assignments to the standard required and succeed on their programmes. Tutors monitor learners' progress, attendance and punctuality particularly closely, and intervene swiftly, using a range of effective strategies to support learning, secure improvement and enable learners to achieve. They give learners appropriate guidance on the progression opportunities open to them.
- Initial assessment, advice and guidance are very effective in ensuring that learners enrol on the most appropriate course and at the most appropriate level. Teachers use this information to plan learning effectively and set targets for learners' progress. However, target setting is not sufficiently challenging for some learners. Teachers place too much emphasis on targets to complete units and qualifications and give insufficient attention to increasing knowledge or developing skills. As a result, a minority of learners are not clear about the progress they are making or what they need to do to achieve their learning goals.
- In lessons, teachers' feedback to individual learners is thorough, detailed and specific and supports their learning effectively. Teachers give learners constructive and detailed feedback on their written assignments and learners use it well to improve their work. Teachers check spelling and grammar in written work but do not always provide sufficient guidance on how to correct errors.

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

Outstanding

- Over the last four years, leaders and managers have made remarkable progress in improving all aspects of the college's performance. The very large majority of learners now achieve their qualifications, and the quality of provision, including teaching and learning, is excellent. The key to the college's transformation lies in highly effective leadership, combined with the collective endeavour of all staff that has established a culture in which learners take absolute priority, and there is an unrelenting focus on each learner achieving his or her best.
- The college's strategic priorities are sensible, clearly focused and provide a good template against which progress can be evaluated. Governors receive comprehensive reports from senior managers on key aspects of the college's performance, and are increasingly adept at interpreting these reports to ask searching questions of college leaders. Governors recognise their responsibility for monitoring all aspects of learners' experience, and are improving their understanding by touring teaching areas while lessons are taking place.
- Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are exemplary. The formal system of observing teaching and learning is exceptionally thorough, and teachers are

given extensive support to help them to improve where appropriate. Accurate judgements are assured by the large number of joint observations conducted, and these also enable the sharing of good practice. However, observers do not currently give enough emphasis to reporting on the standard of learners' work in lessons, or on their progress in developing their English and mathematical skills. Where appropriate, employers are invited to observe lessons to ensure that industry standards are being met and that learners are being prepared well for employment.

- In addition to the formal procedures an impressive array of strategies, including coaching and mentoring by excellent practitioners and a range of specialists, motivates teachers to reflect on their practice, to share their ideas, and to improve. These initiatives are supplemented by an imaginative variety of staff development activities that focus clearly on developing teachers' range and depth of pedagogical techniques.
- The high expectations that permeate the college are reflected in its highly effective performance management procedures. Poor performance is identified swiftly, and the college offers a range of personal support to help teachers to improve. If improvement is not forthcoming, managers take appropriate action to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by poor provision. From the current year, teachers' progression up the pay scale is linked not only to managers' appraisals of their performance but also to learners' views.
- Quality assurance arrangements are very thorough and detailed, and involve all staff as well as a range of learners and employers. A comprehensive suite of data informs astute analysis of, and judgements on, the quality of provision. Self-assessment reports and course reviews are detailed and accurate, and identify where the quality of provision needs to be strengthened. Support areas, for example estates and finance, judge their effectiveness by reference to the impact of their contribution on learners' experience. The approach to identifying and tackling pockets of weaker performance is rigorous and swift, and is characterised by determined efforts at all levels to diagnose and remedy the underlying causes of the problem. Curriculum managers, with good support from senior managers, have implemented highly effective systems to ensure that they have timely and accurate information on learners' progress.
- College leaders work very effectively with a wide range of partners to analyse and meet the interests of the various communities the college serves in the town. The curriculum offer is adapted quickly to meet emerging demand, for example in responding to local employers' skills needs and to the impact of the current economic downturn. In the competitive environment in which the college operates, managers do their best to foster productive working relationships with schools and other providers.
- College staff have been highly effective in ensuring that all learners have an equal chance of benefiting from the high quality provision offered. There are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups; those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with personal barriers to learning achieve at least as well as others. In many curriculum areas, teachers skilfully encourage learners' understanding and tolerance of the diversity of cultures and subcultures that characterise modern society.
- The college campus provides a safe and harmonious environment. Learners are exceptionally well supported and rightly report that their safety and security are given high priority. Where appropriate, very good attention is paid to health and safety. Formal arrangements for safeguarding learners are comprehensive and all legislative requirements are met fully.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Swindon College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Health and social care</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Public Services</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Building and construction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Hospitality and catering</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Foundation English</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Swindon College</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16-18 and 19+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 1960
	Part-time: 4417
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Andrew Miller
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2009
<b>Website address</b>	www.swindon-college.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>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	568	30	556	137	653	276	5	6
<b>Part-time</b>	114	646	50	2338	41	463	1	90
<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+		
	179	217	99	233	1	6		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	337							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	263							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	392							
<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>■ Solomon Training</li> <li>■ S&amp;B Automotive Academy</li> <li>■ Train Learn</li> <li>■ Taiga Training Ltd</li> <li>■ Bridge Training Ltd</li> <li>■ Work Skills Ltd</li> <li>■ Track Training</li> <li>■ Civil Skills Plus</li> <li>■ TBG Learning Ltd</li> </ul>							

- Quality Transport Training Ltd
- Learning Curve (JAA) Ltd
- Prospects Training International Ltd

## Additional socio-economic information

The level 2 attainment of school leavers is below national rates at Key Stage 4, with mathematics performance being particularly low. Many college students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and parts of Swindon which are among the most deprived nationally. The economic downturn has had a significant impact on the town, with major employers reducing staff numbers.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Penelope Horner 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 learners' 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 learners 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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