

New College Telford

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		19–22 March 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for students

This college is good because:

- Students' success rates increased substantially in 2011/12 after a period of decline. Students make good progress at AS-level and their progression between AS and A-level study and into higher education is at a high rate.
- Most advanced level students work hard and attend well. They develop good skills in research, analysis and evaluation.
- Teaching has improved and is good in most advanced level subjects. Teachers use assessment well to support learning.
- The learning environment has improved markedly with new and refurbished accommodation and improvements to information and learning technology.
- Managers' very effective actions have improved most aspects of the college's work.

This is not yet an outstanding college because:

- Students' progress compared to their starting points is not yet good at A-level and not enough students gain high grades.
- The gap between the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their peers has not closed sufficiently.
- The quality of intermediate level provision varies too much and the majority requires improvement.
- Students' attendance on intermediate level courses requires improvement.
- Students' independent learning skills are not consistently well developed.
- Self-assessment of a few aspects of the college's work is underdeveloped.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Raise teachers' expectations of A-level students' progress so that they fulfil their potential and achieve high grades.
- Ensure managers frequently monitor the progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure their achievement continues to improve.
- Help students to develop their independent learning skills by ensuring that teachers consistently make them think for themselves. Reduce the amount of coursework students complete in lessons and increase the focus on directing students to undertake relevant independent work to support their studies.
- Improve the success of intermediate level students by strengthening the arrangements for supporting them, ensuring teachers structure their lessons more carefully to include variety and the frequent reinforcement of the main learning points and continue the focus on improving attendance.
- Increase students' involvement in developing their individual learning plans. Make sure that staff share and review the plans more frequently with students.
- Include the evaluation of students' progression and destination rates in self-assessment. Increase the rigour of lesson observation by ensuring that observers take full account of the quality of assessment and they evaluate the development of students' independent learning skills precisely.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Students' achievement improved markedly in 20011/12. Their success rates on A-level courses were high, but despite an increase, their success rates remain below average at AS-level in part reflecting their below average prior attainment. Students' success rates on vocational courses at advanced level are below average, mainly because too few students complete their courses, particularly in music and sport.
- Compared to their prior attainment, students make good progress at AS-level and achieve beyond expectations, particularly in chemistry, geography and media studies. On most applied GCE courses, students' progress is also good, particularly on travel and tourism courses and in health and social care. Students' progress at A-level is more modest and they rarely exceed expectations.
- Students' success rates on intermediate level vocational courses and GCSEs are below average, largely because a higher than average proportion of students withdraw before the end of their courses. Students who complete their courses have high pass rates and a significant proportion who take GCSEs in mathematics and English gain grades at A* to C. An increasing number of students take functional skills qualifications at foundation level to improve their mathematical and English skills and their success rates have increased to be above average.
- The gaps between the achievement of students from different minority ethnic groups and the overall college success rate are neither significant nor widening. The gap between the few adult students and their younger peers is narrower than nationally. Male students' success rates are lower than female students. This gap is similar to that nationally and has not increased over time.

- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities underachieve compared to their peers. This gap in achievement has widened over the last three years and, in 2011/12, was too wide. However, in 2012/13, staff are providing much better support for these students and their staying-on rate is increased and their progress is largely good.
- Students' attendance at advanced level is good, with little difference between the attendance of male and female students. However, at intermediate level, students' attendance requires improvement. A small minority of students are unpunctual to lessons.
- Students' standard of work is generally good across most subjects. Their written work is often neat and carefully presented. Teachers develop most students' creative skills well, for example in art work and performances. Students are confident and proficient in using information and communication technology.
- Because they frequently work together in groups, most students develop good personal and social skills, which help prepare them for their future careers. They become more confident and learn skills, particularly those of analysis and evaluation. However, their wider skill development is sometimes limited because teachers do too much to help them. For example, when developing students' use of complex language, teachers assist too much with pronunciation rather than insisting they practise in order to gain confidence.
- A large proportion of students move on from AS to A-level study. The number of students who apply for university places has increased over the last three years. Nearly three quarters of eligible students took up a place at university in 2012/13 on completion of their course.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching has improved which is reflected in the marked increase in students' achievement in 2011/12. The large majority of lessons are good, but few are outstanding, often because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Most students value and enjoy their lessons. A very few have had their learning disrupted by staff changes and absence and they are less satisfied.
- In the good lessons, teachers explain topics clearly, often in an interesting and engaging way. They ask searching questions, pursue full responses from students and encourage analytical and critical thinking to consolidate learning. In a few lessons, teachers ask too many open questions, rarely check understanding widely across the group and tend to accept students' superficial responses.
- Teachers plan students' learning carefully and schemes of work are often comprehensive, shared with students and include a wide range of suitable tasks and activities. Teachers expect students to prepare for lessons and most provide good resources to support this. In a few subjects, the limited information available on the virtual learning environment reduces students' opportunities to augment their studies.
- Students receive helpful support from teachers in completing their coursework. Teachers allow time in lessons for students to undertake research and draft their work. Most of this time students use constructively where teachers prompt and encourage them to deepen their knowledge and improve their work. However, sometimes students spend too much time on coursework and teachers are too prescriptive in their guidance particularly on vocational and applied courses, which limits students' learning.
- Most teachers' use of continuous assessment is good, but a minority do not effectively reinforce or check learning frequently enough. Most teachers' feedback is precise and closely referenced to grading criteria and marking bands, which helps students to add information to their work. However, teachers' feedback about improving skills and deepening understanding or knowledge is less well developed.
- Teachers encourage students to use technical terms accurately and develop an appropriate subject vocabulary. As a result, most students become confident and practised in speaking

about their subjects. Teachers provide helpful summary comments for students on how to improve their writing and marking of written work usually includes correction of spelling and punctuation.

- Managers and staff have made a number of significant and highly positive changes to support students. The range of support services is now close to the main entrance and refectory, and is in an open plan setting. The creation of the new posts of non-teaching learning mentors helps ensure students’ easy access to support staff. Staff promote the value of support to students well and endeavour to reduce any stigma previously attached to receiving help.
- Staff provide good support for advanced level students based on accurate information about their progress against their individual targets. Staff use individual learning plans that are well informed through initial assessment and progress reviews. However, because students have limited involvement in reviewing and contributing to these plans their value is underdeveloped. Support and monitoring arrangements for intermediate level students are developing quickly, but these are not yet fully effective.
- Managers have arranged for the recent refurbishment of many classrooms and improved students’ access to information and learning technology. Learning resource centres are well equipped. The standard of learning materials is generally high. Not all science rooms have enough equipment and the design workshops lack digital technologies.
- Staff promote a good range of enrichment activities for students. Speakers from industry regularly give talks about work and the abilities and aptitudes students need to gain employment.
- Students receive good advice and detailed information to choose a study programme matched to their career aspirations. Staff provide helpful guidance on progression, which supports students moving from AS to A-level study. The range of partnerships with regional universities provides them valuable insight into higher education opportunities, which many take up.
- Students’ comprehensive induction raises their awareness of equality and diversity. Teachers in most lessons develop students’ understanding of difference and opportunity very successfully. For example, dance students explored gender and persecution issues through choreographed movements inspired by witch trials of the 16th century. Teachers skilfully exploit opportunities in discussion to clarify and promote cultural tolerance.

<p>Social sciences including psychology</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Good teaching and assessment ensure students’ good progress in most lessons as shown by their high achievement AS-level when compared to their prior attainment and their high success rates at A-level in economics, geography and politics. In the few subjects where students’ achievement is lower, the quality of teaching has improved and students are learning well.
- Teachers set challenging and varied tasks and activities in most lessons, which require students to develop their thinking, research and analytical skills to a high level. For example, economics students debated a range of economic outcomes caused by inflationary pressures in considerable detail followed by analysing and applying the effects to regional industry. In these lessons, teachers make sure that students develop valuable independent learning skills.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge students sufficiently, particularly those that are more able. They allow all students to work at the same pace, over direct parts of lessons, and accept students’ passive attitude to learning. In these lessons, students rarely use independent research skills and rely too much on the teacher for support.

- Students and teachers make very effective use of a wide range of information and learning technology in their research. Psychology students use mobile phones for research, for example, to explore the differing theories on the causes of depression. However, in a few lessons, teachers and students do not exploit sufficiently the learning potential of information technology, for example, through dull and unimaginative use of interactive whiteboards.
- Teachers regularly and effectively use a wide range of assessment methods. They use the results to inform accurately students of their progress to meet their target grades. Teachers use direct questions well to reinforce and check that students learn key points securely. Most teachers’ feedback on written work gives detailed direction on how to improve as well as correcting grammar and spelling.
- Students benefit from effective advice and guidance, which ensures they are on the right course. Staff support students well including with additional learning support, both in and outside the classroom. Thorough initial assessment identifies support needs promptly and students requiring support receive additional help with their work. In addition, students can and do self-refer for extra support.
- The effectiveness of individual learning plans to support students and their learning is under developed. Students do not have ownership of their individual learning plans and this impedes their ability to plan and influence their learning to support better their aspirations and career goals.
- Teachers help students to develop and extend their understanding of equality and diversity very well through focusing and developing relevant topics. For example, sociology students in discussion about the role of media identified and considered carefully how fears reported in the media could develop ‘moral panic’ giving rise to stereotyping and victimisation of groups within society.

English and modern foreign languages

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, support and academic guidance, particularly for students on AS-level courses in English, require improvement. Students’ success rates are high on most GCSE and A-level courses, but are low on AS-level courses where teachers have not ensured that students make good progress compared with their starting points.
- Teachers help A-level English students well to analyse texts in detail and to structure arguments logically. They set tasks that ensure students master the technical language needed to discuss language or literature. However, teachers rarely direct students to read widely beyond their set texts or encourage them to follow up their literary interests outside the classroom.
- Teachers do not help students sufficiently to gain independent learning skills, particularly in English. In this subject, students tend to rely on the teacher and make too little contribution or take enough responsibility for their learning. Teachers do not set regular homework except in modern foreign languages lessons. Teachers do not ensure that students manage their notes and study materials constructively to support their learning.
- Teachers motivate students well when learning modern foreign languages. They ensure that students acquire good communication skills and can apply these practically. As a result, many students can express opinions on a range of topics. However, in English, teachers frequently fail to ensure that AS-level students improve their accuracy in grammar and pronunciation.
- Teachers plan the majority of lessons well to include variety and maintain students’ interest. For example in French and German lessons, revision games are followed by lively and relevant

vocabulary building exercises such as linked to the detailed study of a film. An exciting enrichment programme including visiting speakers, theatre visits and trips abroad helps to extend learning.

- Teachers support GCSE students to gain essential skills for work and further study. Their lessons help students to communicate accurately and effectively in speech and writing and apply their skills confidently, for example in song writing. GCSE Spanish students learn to speak spontaneously and at length quickly due to good teaching.
- Good resources support learning. Teachers use interactive whiteboards and video imaginatively to make learning interesting. Students make good use of a dedicated modern language 'drop-in' centre. A well-stocked film library allows language students to pursue their interests at home.
- Staff provide students with good informal individual support, but they are unsystematic in identifying and tackling underachievement promptly and effectively, particularly at AS-level. Staff successfully provide specialist help for vulnerable students to overcome barriers to learning. Language students develop good confidence in speaking and listening through weekly one-to-one sessions with foreign language assistants.
- Teachers ensure students have a good understanding of examination requirements and their target grade. They mark work carefully, but their feedback about skill development to achieve target grades is underdeveloped. Students' attendance is below average, but it is improving.
- Shortcomings in the accuracy and appropriateness of information, advice and guidance related to placing students on English courses have contributed to low success rates at AS-level. Staff have rectified this position by reviewing the curriculum, setting more realistic entry requirements and improving induction arrangements for the next intake, but current AS-level students' retention rate remains below average.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well. They use materials that broaden students' awareness of gender, sexuality, culture and faith very effectively and teachers discuss and challenge issues such as stereotyping. Students enjoy learning about the culture of the countries whose languages they are studying.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- The principal, well supported by governors, makes certain that all staff have a clear focus on putting students' achievement first including through his high involvement in monitoring individual students' progress thoroughly. This focus helped ensure a marked increase in students' success rates in 2011/12. In addition, managers' records of students' current progress indicates that their retention rates are higher than at a similar point in the previous year.
- Cross-college communication is very effective. A coherent and successful cycle of meetings ensures that all staff are informed appropriately about developments and can contribute to decision making. Staff are largely positive about the changes. Managers' accountability for students' performance is high.
- Senior managers set challenging targets for students' performance. They use data very effectively to identify underperforming courses and intervene promptly including supporting staff in implementing improvements. For example, the provision of mentors and increased challenging of absence have improved the retention and attendance of students at risk of underperformance significantly.
- Governors keep themselves well informed about the college's performance. They recognise the need to increase students' achievement, particularly their retention rates on courses. They have supported strongly the changes put in place over the last year by the new principal, raised their expectations of managers and increased their level of challenge to them. Governors support strongly the sound developments to make the curriculum more relevant to the local needs.

- Good and frequent staff development activities match well teachers' development needs, which lesson observations, appraisal and the course reviews clearly identify. However, a few observers' evaluation of independent learning and assessment lacks rigour. Teachers' good practice is recognised and shared well in development activities. Teachers have good resources including improved information and learning technology. This has helped them raise the standard of teaching and learning.
- Self-assessment is comprehensive and thorough. Governors and students carry out robust validation of the judgements, but a minority of evaluations, including, the analysis of data on students' progression and destinations, is underdeveloped. The quality improvement plan contains specific and relevant actions, which managers and governors monitor regularly. Course reviews are accurate. Managers use the reviews effectively to raise standards.
- Senior managers undertake thorough termly curriculum reviews based on analysing data for every student and course. They identify promptly where provision needs improving. Curriculum managers use data and action points very effectively to inform their monthly meetings with teachers, and to monitor progress against targets.
- Managers have improved all the areas identified as issues at the previous inspection and monitoring visit. However, they recognise that progress against targets is not consistent across all areas of the college's work. Progress to increase success rates on intermediate level courses is slow.
- Senior managers are developing the curriculum soundly to support local and regional employment needs, for example, in science and technology. This includes the building of a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) centre. They are broadening intermediate level provision, including vocational courses to support young people not in education, employment or training.
- A full-time sabbatical student president, a new post in 2012/13, chairs the active student council of 49 subject representatives. This forum is becoming more influential and ensures that managers and governors take note of students' views. For example, students have increased the number of social events, influenced the design of tutorials and the instigation of homework and revision clubs.
- Managers maintain a wide range of productive partnerships with nearby schools, colleges, higher education institutions and local industries, which support students' progression opportunities. The governing body reflects a variety of local interests, and brings valuable perspectives from industry, education, business and local government to inform the college's work.
- Managers ensure that the wider aspects of equality and diversity are promoted well through community events such as a Mardi Gras festival, a programme of external speakers, including a paralympian, and increased communication with local minority ethnic groups. Managers use data accurately to identify gaps in achievement between different groups. They take appropriate action and all gaps are either small or closing.
- The thorough arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Managers' good links with local specialist support agencies ensures that students' needs are resolved promptly and appropriately.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

New College Telford									
Inspection grades are based on a provider’s performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Outcomes for learners	3		3	3					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2		2	2					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2		2	2					

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Social Sciences	2
Psychology	2
English	3
Modern foreign languages	3

Provider details

New College Telford	
Type of college	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,310
	Part-time: 146
Principal/CEO	Garry Phillips
Date of previous inspection	December 2009
Website address	www.nct.ac.uk

College information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Full-time	0	0	117	0	1,115	16	0	0
Part-time	0	9	11	7	40	37	0	9
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	10							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the college contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 							

Additional socio-economic information

New College Telford is a large college based on one site in Wellington on the outskirts of Telford. Classroom-based courses are available in 11 of 15 sector subject areas. Most courses are at advanced level. Most students come from within the borough of Telford and Wrekin. Female students slightly outnumber males. Four wards within the borough have high levels of socio-economic deprivation. The proportion of students of minority ethnic heritage has increased and it is higher than in the local population. The unemployment rate in the borough is similar to regional and national rates. The proportion of pupils who leave school aged 16 with five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics in Telford and Wrekin is similar to nationally.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Philippa Francis HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college'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 and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected within the report. Inspectors observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report.

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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