

Stafford College

General further education college

Inspection dates		15–19 April 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Learners' outcomes are not yet good.
- Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet had sufficient impact. The quality of lessons and other learning activities is too variable and is not consistently good.
- Teaching and learning is not sufficiently challenging and too few learners make good progress.
- Some learners do not display work readiness even on advanced level courses: their poor punctuality and personal organisation hinders learning.
- The development of mathematical and English skills is too variable.
- Self-assessment does not identify clearly weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment to explain learners' outcomes. Observers' evaluations of lessons do not emphasise learning and progress consistently.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Leaders, managers, staff and governors share a determination and demonstrate the capacity to improve the quality of provision for learners.
- The college provides an inclusive, harmonious and safe learning environment of mutual respect in which learners' views are sought and acted upon to improve their learning experience.
- Good, well-maintained resources, including realistic work environments, enable learners to develop their skills well and are valued and respected by learners.
- Staff provide good support to learners to help them achieve. The close monitoring of learners' progress and the development of effective intervention strategies is resulting in higher success rates and a higher proportion of learners remaining on their courses.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Continue to work with teaching staff to:
 - raise the expectations and self-reliance of learners
 - ensure that teachers make consistently good use of learners' prior attainment information so that learning activities are planned to meet individual needs, enabling learners to meet their potential ,in particular on advanced level vocational courses
 - improve the development and integration of English and mathematics, and of functional skills in a vocational context
 - ensure all subject areas use information and learning technologies consistently well
 - check learners understanding during lessons more thoroughly and consistently
 - ensure that feedback to learners and action planning for improvement gives learners sufficiently detailed guidance on what they need to do to improve and on the progress they are making.
- Accelerate the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - observers focus consistently well on the impact of teachers' activities on students' learning and progress
 - observers always provide clear and precise next steps for teachers in action planning to enable continuing professional development to be tailored very closely to their needs
 - self-assessment explores more thoroughly the root causes in teaching and learning that have contributed to learners' underperformance and identifies those areas of strength that have contributed to stronger outcomes for learners.
- Raise the standard of teachers' planning for the exploration of equality and diversity themes in lessons in a vocational context and ensure they are confident to exploit such opportunities when they arise during lessons.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Success rates of learners on long courses improved markedly in 2011/12. The college success rate for adults is now around the national average but for learners aged 16 to 18 it remains below. These improvements occurred on courses of all levels although the success rate of learners remains low on advanced level courses, both academic and vocational. Success rates on GCE AS level courses are historically very low and on GCE A level courses are low. The college no longer offers GCE AS level provision and GCE A level provision will be discontinued when the current cohort of learners completes in summer 2013.
- Both achievement and retention improved in 2011/12: achievement rose to around the national average although retention remained below. Retention on advanced level courses is well below the national average, especially for learners aged 16 to 18. In the current year retention is higher than at the same time last year although the improvement on each year of two year courses is modest. Most learners make the progress expected of them given their starting points. Attendance is satisfactory overall.
- The success rate of pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools is very high. Learners' achievement on functional skills improved substantially in 2011/12 but remains well below the national average.

- In a few subject areas too few apprentices achieve their framework and many do not achieve within the expected timescale, although in others, for example motor vehicle, learners are more successful. In child care and early years and administration overall success rates and success rates within agreed timescales are low. In the current year more apprentices are on track to achieve. Apprentices gain good work skills in many areas and demonstrate good levels of competence in their specialist area. A very high proportion of work place learners achieve their qualification because of good programme design in partnership with employers.
- The employability skills of learners on many courses have been improved by the introduction of additional work-related qualifications this year: retention on these programmes is good. In several curriculum areas, such as hotel and catering, hairdressing and beauty and motor vehicle learners develop their vocational skills and professional practice well, working directly with clients in very high quality real work environments. Older learners gain confidence by developing their English skills. Learners in performing arts and music enjoy opportunities to develop their skills through performance.
- The college monitors learners' progression well. Progression rates of foundation and intermediate learners within further education and onto course related employment are high. Most learners on advanced level courses progress either into higher education or course related employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving and support for learners at risk of underachievement is much more robust than at the previous inspection, the impact of which is reflected in the marked increase in success rates in 2011/12. However, a significant proportion of lessons require improvement and teaching is only securely good in a few subjects, including sport and beauty therapy.
- Teachers are keen to improve their practice and work well together to share ideas. For example, teachers in health and social care and in sport share best practice and broaden their range of effective teaching strategies accordingly. Most teachers make good use of the helpful staff development opportunities including supporting them to produce high quality learning materials. Teachers have good ideas about how to promote equality and diversity but too few develop these sufficiently within learning activities.
- Learners' attitudes to their studies are largely positive and more are enjoying and benefiting from their college experience as shown by the increased proportion of current learners remaining on programme. Teachers endeavour to interest and engage learners, for example, some use their industrial credibility and technical expertise very well to inspire and motivate learners. However, a minority of teachers do not have high enough expectations and tend to tolerate some learners' shortcomings such as poor punctuality or unpreparedness for learning.
- Teachers now use a wider range of strategies to support learning. For example, in some subjects learners participate in discussions in carefully organised mixed ability groups. They undertake tasks requiring skill in comparing and contrasting, for example in beauty treatments and they research topics independently using a range of sources. However, these approaches are not consistently effective because strategies are not always well matched to learners' needs, do not reach a meaningful conclusion or learners are insufficiently prepared in terms of prior learning to gain value from activities.
- Teachers prepare detailed profiles of learners from good initial assessment to help them plan learning. However, a minority do not make good use of these to differentiate their activities and allow all learners to work at the same pace and task thus limiting learners' potential for maximum achievement. Teachers provide good verbal feedback but written feedback varies too much in effectiveness.

- Coursework assessment is conducted well but teachers' use of assessment during learning to measure the extent of learners' knowledge and understanding requires improvement. While a minority of teachers use questions expertly to probe and deepen learning, too often questions are not fully developed or used sufficiently extensively to check fully learners' understanding. As a result, teachers do not always adapt their lessons to provide extra support or the right level of challenge for different ability groups. Teachers do not always consolidate learning through meaningful summaries of learning activities.
- Teachers intervene quickly and effectively to support learners at risk of underperformance, for example, the relatively few remaining A-level students benefit from a high level of personal support. The provision of additional learning support is particularly effective for foundation and intermediate level learners who achieve at a higher rate than their peers. However, teachers' and learners' use of individual learning plans is underdeveloped. Actions included in these plans are insufficiently comprehensive of all aspects of learners' study programmes and are rarely specific and measurable or regularly and thoroughly reviewed.
- Following significant review of arrangements, teachers provide good advice to learners particularly about the demands of their course and progression opportunities. Induction arrangements are improved and staff go to considerable lengths to guide learners in their choice of course.
- Teachers' focus on developing learners' English, mathematical and functional skills has increased. In a few subjects, teachers consistently promote and reinforce these skills effectively, for example in literacy by the productive use of subject-based glossaries but this is not yet widespread across subjects.
- Apprentices do not consistently benefit from good teaching. In the better sessions, learners are interested and motivated and can link their learning well to improve their work and personal development. However, too many teaching sessions do not stretch and challenge learners sufficiently or assess their learning. Written feedback does not always clearly identify what they need to do to improve. Assessment in the workplace is more robust and flexible and allows learners to demonstrate and explain their learning more clearly. Learners are now more aware of their progress because of improved reviews and target setting.
- Learning resources are mostly of high quality: new and refurbished accommodation across the extensive campus along with a spacious library well-equipped with computers provides a high quality learning environment. Teachers and learners are making increased use of the virtual learning environment and information and learning technology (ILT) is used widely in some subjects but not all. In a few, such as catering and hospitality, technology use is limited which restricts learners' opportunities to develop their skills and confidence.

Health and social care and early years

Apprenticeships

Other work based learning

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in employer responsive provision requires improvement reflecting variable outcomes for learners. Success rates in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) health and social care and NVQ child development at intermediate level are above the national average but on NVQ advanced level child development success rates are well below the national average. Overall outcomes on apprenticeship programmes have fallen to below the national average because of slow completion of functional skills.
- Health and social care and child development teaching and assessment are variable. The best sessions use technology innovatively to develop and consolidate knowledge. One safeguarding session used a TV game-show as a template for revision. Learners are confident and able to

engage respectfully in sensitive and conflicting discussions. Teachers effectively link theory to practice to extend learners' knowledge.

- However, in a few sessions teachers do not engage and motivate learners or devise extension activities to stretch and challenge learners. Lessons are not always personalised to take account of initial assessment. Lesson plans are too group-focused despite the availability of detailed learner profiles.
- Improved monitoring processes enable staff to identify failing learners more quickly and to initiate effective support strategies. However, monitoring information is incomplete as the recording of learners' progress is not fully integrated across all aspects of the programme, especially attendance and progress in functional skills.
- Learners access to functional skills English and mathematics is flexible and arranged around the learners' work schedules. However, in ICT no such flexibility exists leading to some learners completing their NVQ without having completed their functional skills within their time framework. Examinations are not arranged in the workplace and many learners do not have the confidence or desire to attend college for examinations.
- Learners benefit from good levels of care, engagement and support in the workplace. Learners' action plans are focused on their work role and effectively target and guide progress. Learners understand what and how they need to develop to achieve satisfactory competence; they value the helpful guidance they are given.
- Assessments provide evidence from a range of sources, including witness testimonies, personal statements and reflective practice, to support skill development. Assessors effectively question learners and encourage discussions on relevant and sometime sensitive personal care issues. Feedback is shared with employers who add learning aims relevant to the setting.
- Learners fully understand their qualifications, assessments and subjects, including safeguarding and maintaining clients' dignity, which they demonstrate well in the workplace. Learners use appropriate terminology when describing their work and a spelling book to consolidate learning, develop literacy skills and build confidence.
- All assessors are appropriately qualified and use their experience to inform learners and employers of further training and career development. Learners understand the progression and promotion opportunities that current and further training could bring.
- Learners give clear examples of the promotion of equality and diversity, safeguarding and health and safety at progress reviews and understand how they have an impact on their role. Lesson and assessment plans adequately include activities that promote discussions about social, cultural, spiritual and moral challenges that health and childcare workers may face.

Engineering and motor vehicle

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in engineering and motor vehicle requires improvement reflecting the decline in outcomes across the area to below the national average in 2011/12. Current learners are making satisfactory progress to achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales. Current in-year retention for engineering learners is good but for motor vehicle learners it has decreased since last year; however this is partly due to some learners progressing onto apprenticeships. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.
- While engineering theory teaching is good, too much engineering practical teaching requires improvement. Motor vehicle practical teaching is mostly good but motor vehicle theory teaching requires improvement.

- In better teaching sessions teachers make good links between theory and practical engineering and motor mechanic skills. Tutors challenge learners and assess their progress, and learners' knowledge is developed and expanded. In engineering theory lessons learning resources, such as non-destructive testing, are used well to engage and motivate learners and the use of a real work environment garage allows motor vehicle learners to develop their practical skills well.
- Weaker teaching sessions are too tutor led and learners learn too slowly because tutors do not motivate them to learn quickly. The tasks set by tutors are often mundane and sometimes repetitive, such as filling in the missing words on a vehicle suspension arm diagram despite vehicle components being available within the class. Engineering learners become disengaged during practical sessions while waiting to use the limited number of vertical and horizontal milling machines.
- Engineering and motor vehicle tutors and learning support staff provide good support for learners. Learners' additional support needs are quickly identified. Vocationally knowledgeable support staff encourage and motivate learners to participate fully in classroom and workshop sessions. Tutors with relevant, current industry experience identify learners' pastoral support needs and offer practical support to overcome personal barriers to learning.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. All engineering and motor vehicle learners complete an appropriate diagnostic assessment and one-to-one interview with a vocational tutor. Some tutors do not regularly update electronic individual learning plans to record learners' progress. The use of targets is underdeveloped, particularly 'grades to beat' minimum target grades.
- Teachers use assessment well for most learners. In practical sessions verbal feedback is clear, concise and informs learners of what they need to do to improve. Engineering and motor vehicle learners are confident in checking their own work against industrial tolerances. However, written feedback on most learners' written assignments is insufficiently detailed to inform learners of their attainment and what they need to do to improve.
- English and mathematics are not sufficiently embedded in most vocational theory sessions. Learners with literacy and numeracy needs are diagnosed accurately and specialist English, mathematics and functional skills tutors provide support. While learners' mathematical skills are developed in practical sessions, opportunities are frequently missed in theory sessions to develop and embed learners' English, mathematical and functional skills. Spelling and grammar mistakes are frequently left uncorrected on learners' written work.
- Appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance enable learners to progress to employment or further training. Learners have a good understanding of future progression routes within and beyond college, including apprenticeships.
- Engineering and motor vehicle learners have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity. This is covered thoroughly during the learners' induction and is promoted satisfactorily by tutors in classroom and practical sessions. Learners treat each other with respect and support each other particularly during team tasks in motor vehicle sessions.

Hospitality and catering

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement which reflects the overall success rates that were low in 2011/12 and were well below national average for learners on advanced level programmes. Current in-year retention has improved substantially because of improvements to enrichment activities, links with employers and development of the ability groups.

- Learning in kitchen and restaurant production classes is good. Learners are challenged to reach high, industry standards. Learners in the kitchen demonstrate a high level of practical skills and produce dishes that are over and above the level they are working towards. Learners in the restaurant serve customers effectively and are courteous, polite and well presented. Feedback from customers is very good.
- Skills development classes require further improvement. More able learners are not always challenged to reach their full potential or encouraged to work towards achieving higher grades. Too many learners ask questions that they should know and tutors answer these rather than encourage learners to think for themselves. Some learners do not consistently demonstrate basic skills such as knife skills and techniques. Skills kitchens lack enough small equipment which hinders learners' progress.
- Theory sessions require further improvement. Sessions are unimaginative and mundane, often following the same format of PowerPoint presentations and question and answer sessions that are not sufficiently well targeted. Visual aids are not used well to make sessions more interesting or interactive. Learners are not encouraged to take ownership of their learning. The use of ILT in sessions is unsatisfactory.
- Learners participate in a wide range of good enrichment activities, industry visits and local and national competitions that build employability skills. Individual and team success is recognised during a celebration of success evening. Recent links with local employers enable students to complete valuable work experience placements, and gain part-time employment. Taster days and vocational visits improve learners' understanding of the industry and working life. Attendance and punctuality have improved since becoming a requirement of participation in external visits and work placements.
- Initial assessment and monitoring of learners' progress requires further improvement. The recently introduced taster day effectively identifies relevant ability groups for first year learners. Learners make adequate progress but are not always set challenging or clear targets. Individual learning plans do not monitor progress effectively and do not take into consideration all aspects of learners' programmes. Learners are not always aware of what they have left to achieve or how they are going to do this.
- Feedback for learners is adequate. Feedback from practical sessions is good and is focused on the dishes produced and the standards of service. Good use is made of learner and peer evaluation of the dishes produced. Written feedback is appropriate and timely. Feedback does give areas for improvement but does not give learners adequate information on how they could improve their overall grade.
- Mathematics and English are adequately embedded into the programmes. Good use is made of ratios in practical sessions. Industry language is clearly explained in both practical and theory sessions. Tutors correct spelling and grammar on marked work, however the volume of basic errors in some of the advanced level BTEC work indicates poor identification of additional support needs in English.
- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Teachers use naturally occurring opportunities such as menus and themed events to promote and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding of key equality and diversity themes in practical sessions. Students cater for a diverse range of clients. In theory sessions teachers miss many opportunities to expand and discuss areas of equality and diversity.

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

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Although outcomes are around the national average the trend of improvement is good with significant improvements seen on the intermediate diploma in sport and the advanced extended diploma in sport and exercise science. Retention has improved in the current year and learners make good progress in lessons.
- The management of learning is effective in most lessons. Enthusiastic teachers plan and deliver engaging activities. Learners benefit from high expectations from staff and make good progress. The use of technology is good. In the most effective lessons activities develop higher order thinking. Teachers use questioning techniques well to develop understanding and check progress. Learners attend regularly and enjoy their lessons. However the quality of sessions delivered in sports clubs by a training partner is too variable and some is of a low standard.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to plan effectively and support learners. In practical lessons, students show a good understanding of health and safety relevant to the vocational context and are able to conduct basic risk assessments showing sound awareness of environmental factors relevant to participation in sport and exercise.
- Where lessons are less effective the focus is on whole group activities, not planned for individual needs. They are too teacher directed, questioning techniques are less well developed and tasks and activities do not engage all learners. In these lessons some low level disruption hinders learners' progress.
- Advanced level learners in sport study additional units that stretch higher ability learners and support progression to higher levels of study. Enrichment opportunities enable learners to develop personal, social and life skills and gain experience to support progression to education, employment and training.
- Initial advice and guidance has improved since the last inspection. Learners are aware of course demands and revised entry requirements have a positive impact on retention. Additional learning support requirements are identified promptly and addressed. Detailed group profiles support planning in lessons however this is at an early stage of development.
- A variety of assessment methods, such as presentations, written reports, use of viva and observations, are used to support achievement and meet learners' needs. While most marking, feedback and guidance is satisfactory or better, some is inconsistent across assessors and levels of programme. The standard of learners' work and assessment delivered through the training partner requires improvement because assessment is over generous and feedback does not guide learners sufficiently in how to improve their work.
- In a number of lessons the use of formative self- and peer-assessment is effective, informing and supporting learner progress, for example in a physiology lesson students were peer assessing the completion of pre-exercise testing in a practical fitness facility.
- Numeracy skills are developed well in some lessons through vocationally relevant activities involving use of heart rates, percentages and averages. The development of English skills is adequate: learners are encouraged to use vocational terminology and key words, and to spell and define key terms.
- Learners are supported to progress through regular target setting within tutorial, linked to aspirational target grades based on entry qualifications. These are reviewed through individual tutorials and students access their targets through the college virtual learning environment.

Target setting is more effective where students are encouraged to be proactive in reviewing the targets with personal tutors.

- Awareness of equality and diversity is satisfactory with planning for its inclusion evident in schemes of work. While most teachers choose resources to raise awareness of equality and diversity in sport with respect to different cultures, gender and disability, they miss opportunities to discuss implications of equality and diversity fully. Learners behave well and support each other in lessons.

Performing arts

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, as do outcomes over the last three years that show considerable variation when compared against national success rates. Retention rates are highly variable. Success rates on some courses are improving and others are declining: the outcomes on some courses are well above national average and others are below. Current in-year retention has improved substantially compared with the same point a year ago though improvement initiatives need further embedding to be secure.
- In the better lessons teachers check knowledge and understanding imaginatively and use a variety of techniques to motivate and engage learners, for example quizzes and nominated questioning. ILT is used well and the high quality teacher presentations are placed on the college virtual learning environment. Assignments are stimulating and the variety of activities sustains learner interest and involvement. Teachers and learners enjoy good working relationships and productive peer learning is evident. Learners demonstrate, through the progress they make in their studies, an enhanced awareness and perception for their chosen art form.
- Teaching and learning requires improvement in too many lessons. Teachers are insufficiently demanding in their expectations for learner self-management and performance work and are over-fulsome in their encouragement of learners. They have too little insistence on recognising and establishing industry practice on some vocational courses. A few practical projects are too ambitious and complicated to meet learners' needs. While attendance is generally good, learner absence from key lessons hinders collaborative projects. Punctuality is poor in several lessons and in one music lesson learner behaviour was unacceptable.
- Teachers use a variety of appropriate methods for assessment including recording and uploading learner work on to the virtual learning environment. Feedback to learners is timely and mainly rigorous and focused on clear criteria referencing. Learners know what they need to do in order to improve and, responding to feedback, are encouraged to re-submit written assignments in order to achieve a better grade.
- Staff have recently re-designed assessment planning with more interim points to aid learners' progress and to avoid assessment overload. Assessment calendars are prominently displayed in classrooms for cross-referencing. Staff monitor learners' work and progress rigorously and emphasis is now placed on learners completing assignments in college study sessions where teachers are available for support.
- Resources support teaching and learning well in both music and performing arts. Refurbished classrooms are maintained to a good level and learners have dedicated access to industry-standard technology equipment. The theatre is well-equipped for lighting and sound and allows for a variety of performance styles and opportunities. Several music staff are current industry practitioners and expertly pass on industry practice to learners. In one music lesson the group was too large for the allocated accommodation, hindering learning.

- Initial and diagnostic assessment is generally used well to set appropriate targets and identify individual needs. The application of functional skills is satisfactorily integrated into the curriculum: teachers identify some opportunities to highlight subject specific aspects into their delivery including tasks that require numeric analysis and awareness. Although teachers pay attention to literacy, some learners continue to misspell vocational terms.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is incorporated in planning and delivery; individual needs are mainly recognised and integrated accordingly. Learners have opportunities to involve themselves in several initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity within their local community.
- Information, advice, guidance and support for learners have improved since the last inspection and help motivate learners to succeed in their learning and progress. Learners appreciate the helpful support they receive and confirm that their experience of college life often exceeds their initial expectations.

Foundation English

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement which reflects the variation in outcomes across programmes. Success and retention rates are low but have improved significantly since the previous inspection, particularly for the large number of 16 to 18 year olds studying at foundation level. The number of adult learners achieving a higher level grade at GCSE is now good although success rates on other intermediate courses vary widely and on some programmes with a smaller number of learners, success rates have declined. While retention rates have mostly improved, attendance is low.
- Since the previous inspection when literacy and numeracy were inadequate, staff development and training have begun to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- In the best lessons, learners are well-motivated by lively and enthusiastic teaching and make good progress. Learners work very well together on varied and well-structured tasks. Imaginative use of ILT alongside a range of more traditional learning materials engages and develops learners' knowledge and understanding well. For example in one lesson, an interesting video clip helped learners identify the key features of advertising text.
- In too many lessons, teachers miss opportunities to check learners' prior knowledge before getting them to complete tasks, resulting in slow progress and boredom for too many learners. On too many functional English courses, tutors do not use enough relevant vocationally linked materials to help learners develop their skills or help them understand how improved English skills might be important for their future careers.
- Learners benefit from immediate feedback on written work in lessons and their understanding is checked frequently through a good range of questioning techniques. However strategies to encourage self-checking are underdeveloped. Tutors mark and assess learners' work accurately and thoroughly, adding commentary that is mostly helpful. However, some learners are not able to benefit fully as they find tutors' handwriting difficult to read.
- Tutors track learners' progress well on all courses and learners on GCSE courses have a good understanding of their progress. However, too many learners on other English courses are not aware of their specific learning targets, how far they have progressed or when they might be ready to take their qualification.
- Learners benefit from the good care and individual support they receive from tutors and support assistants during lessons. Tutors use the results of initial and further assessment to develop useful group profiles that identify the skills individual learners need to develop. However, this

information is not always used well enough to ensure all learners make good progress. Dyslexic learners benefit significantly in the development of a range of English skills through specialist support provided by highly skilled and experienced staff outside of lessons as well as by functional skills tutors adapting teaching and materials appropriately in lessons.

- Staff give learners helpful advice on how to make sensible career choices. Since the previous inspection, improved recruitment strategies and better use of initial and further assessment result in learners being placed on the correct course. For example, a newly established pre-GCSE course is available for learners who are not ready for the pace and the challenge of taking the full GCSE within a year. On functional skills programmes, tutors do not always use the results of assessment well to plan and provide learning to help learner's make good progress.
- Tutors create a positive and inclusive learning environment and take care to present non-stereotypical visual images on materials used with learners. However not all opportunities to promote equality and diversity within lessons are taken. For example, an illustration of women cricketers celebrating winning a trophy was commented upon by the tutor as being unusual but learners were not encouraged to discuss this further.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The Principal and college management team, staff and governors all share a determination and commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment and raise outcomes for learners to good. Leaders and managers ensure that the strategic plan is appropriately rigorous and sets clear targets for the college as a whole.
- The action plan and subsequent self-assessment following the college's last inspection in April 2012 focuses sharply on relevant priorities and is used well to bring about improvement. Senior managers scrutinise these action plans closely and regularly, holding middle managers and course leaders to account for the successful completion of actions. Governors meet regularly to monitor progress, providing good support and challenge. Evidence of improvement in outcomes for learners is visible in improved success rates in 2011/12 and the higher proportion of learners retained on programme than was the case at the same time last year.
- Performance management arrangements are thorough. Analysis of lesson observations, learners' performance data and teachers' progress towards their personal development plans contribute to the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers have access to a wide range of good-quality continuing professional development, that they find valuable.
- The college has made substantial revisions to the observation of teaching and learning scheme since the last inspection, increasing rigour and accuracy and providing a mostly reliable basis for developing teachers' professional practice. However, the extent to which teaching and learning and assessment have improved across the college is variable. Although inspectors saw good and outstanding lessons, they also saw many lessons which required improvement and a very few weak lessons.
- College managers recognise the need to increase the rigour of lesson observation still further by ensuring that observers' evaluation of learning activities is of a consistently high quality and that the next steps for teachers' development are captured with reliable precision. While observers refer appropriately to the prompts in the observation documentation they do not always consider sufficiently or consistently the impact of teachers' actions on learning and progress.
- Self-assessment is evaluative and demonstrates effective and much improved analysis of performance data. However, it is better at cross-college level than in subject areas. The college self-assessment report builds on the findings from the last inspection and the subsequent re-inspection monitoring visit. In subject area reports, rigorous data analysis enables the clear identification of under-performing provision but self-assessment does not explain sufficiently the

areas for development in teaching, learning and assessment that have contributed to this position. This leads to imprecision in tackling the root causes of under-performance.

- Leaders have implemented a significant restructuring since the last inspection. While withdrawing from the Stafford Collegiate delivery of A-levels they have reinforced the college's identity as a key provider of vocational education and training within the area and maintained good relationships with local schools. Managers have removed other weak or uneconomic provision without reducing significantly the overall breadth of the offer, while maintaining its strong partnerships.
- During a time of significant reduction in the operating budget, leaders have delivered an extensive new building project providing excellent new facilities for learners, on time and within budget. Financial management and position remain strong. Management of subcontracted provision is sound, although managers have been slow to ensure corrective action following quality monitoring of a training partner in sport. Their working relationship with the main subcontractor in work-based learning is longstanding and particularly effective in developing apprenticeships within warehousing and distribution.
- Leadership of apprentice programmes has improved recently. Detailed plans identifying key actions needed to improve this provision and improvements in management information are leading to a more comprehensive appreciation of in-year retention and achievement rates. In some subject areas the use of an electronic individual learning plan is used well by learners, staff and employers to monitor effectively attendance and progress.
- The centralised planning and promotion of equality and diversity are extensive and of good quality. However the extent to which teachers plan and develop equality and diversity themes in lessons is variable and not as effective as the lesson observation scheme would indicate. Teachers do not always develop well opportunities presented in lessons to explore equality and diversity themes in a vocational context.
- Managers analyse performance data by different groups to identify potential gaps in achievement and investigate these well. They are making good progress towards achieving their equality objectives, including narrowing the gap in achievement between male and female learners. The college provides a respectful, inclusive and harmonious learning environment.
- Managers and staff listen to learners' views and make good use of these to improve learners' experience at college. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The college stages innovative activities to raise students' awareness of safeguarding and equality and diversity, such as performances by external drama groups on topics such as bullying.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stafford College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3
Early years and playwork	3
Engineering	3
Motor Vehicle	3
Hospitality and catering	3
Sport	2
Performing arts	3
Foundation English	3

Provider details

Stafford College

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 2,847
	Part-time: 1,670
Principal/CEO	Mr Stephen Willis
Date of previous inspection	April 2012
Website address	www.staffordcoll.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

[illegible]

Additional socio-economic information

Stafford College is a large college serving the town and a large part of mid and south Staffordshire. It operates from one main and one smaller site in the town centre. The proportion of pupils aged 16 who achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C including English and mathematics in Staffordshire is slightly above the national average. The local employment rate is above the national average. Around 10% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with around 7% in the local population.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Anne Taylor HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal (Curriculum and Quality) 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 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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