

# Central College Nottingham

## General further education college

Inspection dates		20–24 May 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
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:

- The proportion of learners and apprentices who achieve their qualification is too low. The rate of improvement of this proportion of learners is too slow.
- A minority of lessons do not provide enough challenge to learners to enable them to make the progress in their qualification of which they are capable. The lack of challenge does not enable enough learners to learn independently.
- A minority of learners do not improve their skills in English and mathematics sufficiently while in lessons and through assignment work.
- Too few learners have the opportunity to develop their vocational skills through work experience placements.
- Management information is not always used effectively to identify underperforming areas and bring about improvements to the quality of courses.
- The implementation of action plans to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the effectiveness of leadership and management varies considerably and has not yet brought about the intended improvements in outcomes for learners.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- Strong strategic partnerships that provide many work-related learning opportunities across Nottingham for a wide range of learners.
- Good strategic direction of, and positive staff response to, the merger.
- An inclusive ethos that enables many learners with very low or no prior educational achievement to succeed in gaining qualifications that help them into employment.
- A strong culture of good behaviour and respect. Learners and staff are respectful of each other and learners behave very well in lessons and in social spaces.
- The good development of learners' personal and social skills. Where they are offered, learners take part in a good range of additional qualifications and activities during their time at the college.
- The good support that learners receive to help them progress to further learning or employment.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all learners are sufficiently challenged so that they make good or better progress and fulfil their potential.
- Devise and implement a strategy to support the development of English and mathematics skills for learners to increase their chances of successfully completing their courses.
- Improve the framework completion rates for apprentices through better monitoring and assessment practices.
- Provide all learners for whom it is relevant with the opportunity to complete work experience through extending the range and effective use of local partners.
- Improve the collection of learners' progression and destination information to employment and further education and training to ensure that managers can monitor the effectiveness with which the meet local skills needs.
- Improve the use of management information to enable prompt intervention to support underperforming curriculum areas.
- Improve the implementation of quality improvement processes to ensure that actions are completed to support all learners in achieving their goals.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
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- Outcomes for learners require improvement as not enough learners achieve their qualifications. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has improved over the last three years, but it remains below the national average for all learners. The large majority of learners aged 16 to 18 on foundation and intermediate level courses achieve their qualifications at a higher rate than those on advanced level courses. Learners aged 19 and over achieve in line with national averages.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification is significantly below the national average at both intermediate and advanced levels. Recent changes to the management of apprenticeship programmes are bringing about improvements in the number of learners completing their course within planned timescales. The results for other work-place learners are in line with the high national averages.
- The progress that many learners make on their qualification in relation to their previous educational attainment is below the average for similar groups of learners at advanced level for most courses. Advanced level learners on music technology and textiles courses make much better progress than learners on other courses.
- Teachers and managers ensure that no significant differences in the achievement of qualifications of learners from different ethnic backgrounds exist. However, men, particularly those who are aged 16 to 18, do not achieve as well as women of the same age.
- College data indicate that fewer learners are leaving their courses early compared to this time last year. Learners' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and those learners who are persistently late or absent are challenged and receive support to improve their attendance. In many cases, this improves retention and attendance rates. However, attendance rates remain slightly below the college's target.

- Learners' achievement of functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics are improving steadily but remain significantly below the national rate. The proportion of learners who achieve GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics at A\*-C grade is improving and is now slightly above the national average for English but remains slightly below for mathematics.
- Many learners gain additional qualifications that relate to their main course and enhance their chances of employment. For example, all learners on travel and tourism courses complete risk assessment and first aid courses and many learners undertake an extended project qualification that enables them to complete a detailed study or project of their choice.
- Where data are available, the proportion of learners progressing to further learning or employment is high. However, the information that the college collects on learners' progression is incomplete in a minority of subject areas.
- The development of wider employability and social skills is good. A minority of learners benefit from the opportunity to undertake valuable work experience placements, both in this country and abroad, although this opportunity is only available in a few subject areas. Some learners are given the opportunity to develop their self-confidence and organisational skills through a wide range of voluntary and community based projects. For example, the participation of learners on sports courses in a national charity project has enabled them to travel to several African countries to coach young people in football skill.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflecting the low but improving outcomes for learners. Managers recognise that too much variation exists and their recent actions have improved the consistency and rigour of the college's lesson observation process. As a result, managers now have a more accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- In the good or better lessons, teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks which motivate and interest learners, helping them to develop skills to become more independent learners. As a result, they make good progress towards achieving their course and personal aims. However, in lessons that require improvement, teachers plan and deliver activities that focus too much on their input as a teacher, rather than on the individual targets of learners. As a result, lessons fail to challenge all learners, contributing to their slow progress.
- Teachers and managers use an effective cross-college procedure to assess learners' starting points in order to identify long-term targets and goals. In the better lessons, teachers understand learners' previous experiences and achievements and plan activities that build on these, enabling learners to achieve their potential and progress to higher level courses or employment. Within business management, visual arts and media, sport and access to nursing courses, teachers regularly refer to these targets and by setting further specific targets, challenge learners to meet and exceed these. As a result, learners on these courses make good progress.
- In lessons that require improvement, teachers pay insufficient attention to challenging and enabling more able learners to achieve higher grades or extend their practical skills. They focus too much on attempting to get all learners in the group to meet the minimum standard to pass their qualifications.
- The quality of teachers' assessment of learners' performance varies considerably within subject areas and across the college. Although most learners are informed regularly about the progress they make, often the feedback is brief and does not identify sufficiently what they need to do to improve. In the better lessons, such as in science, assessment of learners' work is used to discuss and agree clear targets for further improvement and learning. Often, however

assessment does not clearly identify the next steps that learners need to take or what they should do to improve their grades.

- The quality of assessment for apprentices has recently improved and almost all now receive frequent work-place visits. During these, they receive appropriate support and guidance to enable them to gain the competence and work-place evidence they require to achieve their apprenticeships. Target setting for apprentices requires further improvement as it lacks detail and focuses mainly on qualification achievement. It does not sufficiently challenge apprentices to achieve high standards.
- Through well-established partnerships and good links with local schools and other agencies staff provide learners with good initial advice and information about the courses they could enrol on. Good transition arrangements support learners who have existing additional support needs to continue to receive the support when they start at college.
- Although good in health and social care and early years, access to regular work experience is limited. In some sports and hairdressing and beauty therapy lessons teachers develop English skills well, however in other areas teachers pay too little attention to improving learners' English skills, only occasionally correcting errors in learners' work. Teachers sometimes prepare and distribute learning materials that contain errors.
- A strong commitment by staff to providing an inclusive college environment and curriculum enables learners from diverse backgrounds and different levels of previous educational attainment to work well together. Teachers manage behaviour well and the college deals promptly and appropriately with any incidents of bullying and harassment. The promotion of equality and diversity varies in lessons. Although a few teachers pay good attention to including aspects of diversity in lessons, including when they occur naturally, many lack the skills to do this effectively.

## **Health and social care, early years and playwork**

### **Learning programmes for 16-18**

### **Learning programmes for 19+**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as is reflected in the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications. These are close to national averages but are particularly low for the intermediate level child care and education course and foundation level course in caring for children. In addition advanced level learners in child care and education are not achieving their full potential based on their prior educational achievement. Managers have implemented extra support and monitoring of learners in these areas but it is too soon to measure any impact.
- In the better lessons, learners are set challenging tasks to complete. For example, in an intermediate level lesson, learners, working in groups, were given a scenario about someone being admitted to hospital with complex medical and social needs for whom they had to produce a detailed care plan. Learners linked ideas and previous knowledge well. In the poorer lessons, teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently which results in some learners becoming bored and disruptive.
- The standard of learners' written work varies with the best being of a high level including detailed analysis and evaluations of current practice. However, too much is satisfactory containing just enough detail for a pass grade and in a few cases includes some poor spelling and grammar.
- Attendance is low in a very small minority lessons and not all learners are punctual. Learners are identified as at risk either from poor attendance, or from self-identification prior to enrolment. Teachers monitor closely those at risk and contact them regularly. This strategy has already

resulted in fewer learners leaving their course early. Learner achievement coaches monitor attendance closely and support learners to enable them to attend and achieve.

- Initial advice and guidance learners requires improvement. Staff assess learners' starting points and set them clear targets that they review through regular tutorials. Frequent workshops, in addition to other lessons, support learners well to complete their assignments. However, they do not always use initial assessment effectively to guide learners on to the most appropriate course.
- Assessment is effective and provides clear feedback on what has been achieved and what is still to be completed. Learners understand well how they can improve their grades. However, learners do not always understand the longer-term benefit of achieving higher grades as they can gain employment with a pass grade.
- Learners' work-related skills are developed well through appropriate visits, deaf awareness and first aid training courses. Teachers promote equality and diversity well within the curriculum. They allow learners the opportunity to express their views on issues related to equality but then suggest alternatives that challenge learners' current thinking.

## Engineering

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

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as it has not been of a consistently high standard for all learners, particularly apprentices, and is reflected in the below average but improving outcomes for learners. The proportion of work-based apprentices who successfully achieve the framework has been particularly low mainly as a result of redundancies in a sub-contractor. However, current apprentices now make better progress and college data indicate a significant improvement in the proportion of apprentices due to complete the framework within planned timescales. The proportion of college-based learners who achieve their qualifications has improved over the last three years. College data now indicate that fewer learners leave early and those that stay successfully complete early assessments.
- In the better lessons teachers plan well to ensure all learners make appropriate links between theoretical knowledge and its practical application to raise their understanding and skill levels. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to stimulate and motivate learners to succeed. Teaching materials are of high quality and sessions often include good use of interactive learning technology and visual aids to engage learners and support their progress.
- In the better work-based assessments and reviews, assessors meet regularly with apprentices and set challenging targets so that they to enable them to progress quickly towards achievement of the necessary practical skills and competencies. Apprentices make good progress in the development of personal and social skills that support their achievement of the qualification. However, some reviews do not result in sufficiently specific, timely or structured targets and apprentices are not always clear about what further actions are needed to improve.
- Apprentices participate in off-the-job college-based training that supports their progress and development in achieving their qualifications. While apprentices receive relevant work-based training from employers, they don't always make the progress expected in their off-the-job training as teachers rarely link this to the needs of the apprentice framework or use it to reinforce learning when they are at the college.
- In the weaker lessons, teachers do not plan well enough or include a range of activities to enable all learners to make good progress. Teachers do not routinely use the information they

have available of learners' ability, progress and aspiration for session planning. Teachers focus insufficiently on how learners could improve and achieve higher grades.

- Learners' benefit from access to good college-based learning resources to support their development. For example, they are able to use a modern virtual welding rig to practise welding skills and get timely accurate feedback that helps them to improve. Advanced level students benefit from additional training that enables them to weld to standards that are well above that required by the awarding bodies and significantly enhance their employability.
- Assessors' use of employers to support apprentice training requires improvement. Few are given sufficient opportunity and guidance to contribute fully to learners' success through comprehensive involvement in the planning, delivery and assessment of on-the-job training.
- As a result of the thorough initial assessment, teachers and assessors identify well learners' current levels of experience and learning. However, the use of test results for subsequent planning and recording of individualised learning for apprentices is not effective in supporting their development.
- Learners and apprentices make satisfactory progress in the development of their English and mathematics skills. However, engineering teachers do not effectively increase the rate at which learners' improve the quality of their written English through the routine correction of errors in grammar and spelling. Assessors do not use the opportunities in the work-place to develop further apprentices' skills in English and mathematics.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from the advice, guidance and support they receive from staff that helps them to achieve and progress to employment. However, while all foundation and intermediate learners undertake valuable employability training, there are currently no arrangements for full-time learners to participate in work experience. The rate of progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships and into full-time employment is high.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons requires improvement. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is not extended during college-based taught sessions or in work-place reviews. Teachers and assessors do not use all available opportunities to develop learners' understanding further.

## Building and construction

### Learning programmes for 16-18

### Learning programmes for 19+

### Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Long course success rates have improved and in 2011/12 were at the national average. The proportion of apprentices who complete their qualification successfully has been above the national average over the last three-year period but declined in 2011/12 mostly as a result of redundancies in a sub-contractor. As a result of recent management actions to support these learners better, current apprentices are making good progress.
- Teachers promote high industry standards to their learners. As a result, the quality of a high proportion of practical work is good. For example, brickwork learners demonstrate industry standard skill levels when working on complex facing brickwork with cut brick arches and herringbone panelling.
- In the better lessons, teachers use their skills and experience well to provide a varied range of practical learning activities that enable learners to make progress in construction skills. More able learners are encouraged to practise higher-level competencies in workshop sessions to develop their craft skills. In weaker lessons, teachers do not always make use of their wider



knowledge of individual learners to plan lessons that enable all learners to make good progress. Teachers' use of information and learning technology (ILT) to further enliven lessons is insufficient.

- In the multi-skill workshop, team teaching is effective in improving learners' skills development. Teachers prepare workshop and classroom lessons with frequent changes of activity to ensure learners are motivated to make good progress. For example, to build confidence levels and develop learners' communication skills, teachers in plumbing lessons encourage learners to explain and describe complex principles, such as the thermal insulation requirements for small and larger diameter copper piping, to other learners. However, teachers' use of questioning in a minority of theory lessons does not always check learners' understanding of key concepts.
- Teachers encourage learners to be self-evaluative and learners routinely use a self-evaluation approach to monitor their own standards. Teachers have satisfactory links with local industry and some teachers arrange site visits for learners. However, teachers do not plan for the development of learners' wider employability skills. Very few learners have the opportunity to undertake a work experience placement to help improve their employability prospects.
- Learners recognised to be at risk of falling behind their expected attendance and progress target levels benefit from helpful and effective specialist additional support. Learners in receipt of this support have improved levels of motivation and attendance.
- Advice and guidance are effective in helping learners to progress from one level to the next. As a result, a high proportion of learners progress from foundation to intermediate level and for apprentices from intermediate to advanced level. They are less effective in supporting full-time learners' progression into work.
- Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Teachers use an appropriate range of methods to measure learners' progress. Feedback to learners for practical project work is clear and helpful. However, teachers' feedback to learners for some assignment and coursework lacks sufficient evaluation of progress made and what learners need to do to improve.
- The development of learners' mathematical skills in a minority of lessons is good. Functional skills teachers work creatively to ensure learning is related to the construction terminology. The development of learners' English skills is less well developed. Teachers do not always provide feedback on assessed work on how learners could improve their English skills.
- Resources for practical teaching are satisfactory. Teachers place a strong emphasis on health and safety across all aspects of construction. Teachers do not routinely promote diversity in lessons.

## **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**

### **Learning programmes for 16-18**

### **Learning programmes for 19+**

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy require improvement as reflected in the outcomes for learners that are just below national averages.
- In the better sessions, teachers make high demands of learners, expecting them to demonstrate consistently industry levels of professionalism in the salons. In these sessions, work areas are well prepared with good standards of hygiene and care and use of tools and equipment. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to broaden learners' knowledge and to ensure they have the required skills and understanding to enable them to work effectively on clients. They deliver well planned theory sessions which interest and motivate learners, using a range of useful visual aids and resources to support group activities.

- In the less effective sessions, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of learners, time is wasted, and learners are not sufficiently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers do not plan lessons that sufficiently involve all learners and as a result learners lose interest and teachers are not able to adapt teaching accordingly.
- Assessment is thorough and teachers provide useful feedback that enables learners to understand how they can improve their skills and knowledge. However, teachers place too much importance on learners passing assessments rather than focusing on the development of good quality hairdressing and beauty therapy skills. As a result, learners do not always develop their skills beyond the minimum standard.
- A minority of learners do not attend regularly nor arrive on time which disrupts sessions while teachers spend time with late arrivals and less well motivated learners. Teachers and managers have recently introduced successful strategies to improve attendance.
- Hair and beauty facilities at the Beeston site are very good, reflecting professional standards and contributing to the high levels of progress that learners make. However, not all learners benefit from the same quality of resources. In contrast, at the West Bridgford site the hairdressing salons require updating. Storage space is insufficient and learners' belongings and equipment clutter the already restricted space.
- In sessions where there is a sufficient supply of clients, learners develop their practical skills well. However, a majority of learners make insufficient progress as they carry out simulated practical tasks on head blocks or on each other owing to a lack of clients. As a consequence, learners have insufficient opportunity to work on clients with differing needs, skin and hair types to develop skills to professional standards. Too few learners undertake work experience.
- Initial advice and guidance and results of initial screening ensure learners are on the right level of course. Learning support is good and enables learners to progress from foundation to higher levels. Support staff work effectively with learners, enabling them to contribute in sessions that also helps to improve their confidence and self-esteem.
- Learners feel safe. As a result of staff training, teachers are more confident in dealing with inappropriate behaviour and challenging discrimination and bullying.

## **Sport, leisure and recreation**

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good as reflected in the better progress that current learners are making, with many learners' now achieving high grades in their work. This is a significant improvement compared to previous years. Most learners develop good coaching and practical skills quickly and many develop a deep understanding of the theory that is related to the course. The proportion of learners who successfully achieve their qualification has improved over the last three years but results for 2011/12 still remain slightly below the national average for the majority of courses. Attendance and punctuality are good and fewer learners leave their course early.
- In the better lessons, teachers plan well to make sure that the interest of all learners is maintained and they make good progress. Teachers check frequently that learning is effective and motivate and encourage all their learners to achieve high standards. Most teachers have recent and relevant sporting industry experience that they use well to link theory to current professional practice. Learners benefit greatly from the positive role models provided by their teachers and the way teachers apply their knowledge and experience in lessons.



- Learners make good progress, develop high levels of independence and apply their knowledge well. For example, most advanced level learners take responsibility for setting their own targets that raises their aspiration to gain higher grades. The majority of learners demonstrate a productive attitude to learning and work hard to complete set tasks. They work at their own challenging pace and get good individual support from their teachers.
- Learners develop good independent study skills as a result of the comprehensive range of learning materials that are located on the virtual learning environment. Learners make good use of the opportunity to study during some lessons and outside their timetabled lessons. They take the opportunity to prepare information in advance of lessons or to catch up on work missed such as when competing in elite level sporting events.
- Learners are prepared well for their studies through effective initial assessment. They receive good individual and group support for a range of identified learning needs, including English and mathematics from sports specialist staff. In addition, a wide range of effective support arrangements are made available to learners, including newly introduced arrangements for additional learning support.
- Teachers use a good variety of valid assessment methods in lessons to set further individual learning goals and to reinforce learning. Assessment and verification of learners' work is thorough. Learners receive timely, constructive verbal and written feedback on their work that helps them improve further and make good progress. They are clear about the progress they are making towards their qualifications and have good access to tracking systems.
- Learners develop English and mathematical skills and they have made significant progress since starting their courses. They receive regular feedback on progress from their teacher that is monitored and recorded. Some learners who start with very low levels of literacy and numeracy have made significant improvement both in functional skills and on their main programme.
- As a result of good progress, learners develop their personal, social and employability skills. Most learners improve their employability by completing additional coaching qualifications and leading sports activities in local schools, community venues and sporting facilities. All sports learners participate in volunteering events in the community and many have the opportunity to go overseas that significantly enhances their career progression potential.
- Learners receive thorough information; advice and guidance throughout their programme which helps them select a course that matches their personal aspirations and prior educational achievement. A revised and improved induction programme ensures learners follow the most appropriate programme. More recently, different pathways have been introduced for learners who are studying the advanced level programme which includes sports media, coaching and fitness that has improved learners' commitment and performance.
- Learners have a sound understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They feel respected and safe at college. Diversity is promoted well through unique initiatives including successful international projects such as 'Balls to Poverty' and 'Sport Gambia', at a national level through volunteering work at disability sporting events and at a local level through sports academies. These activities engage learners in a wide range of highly valuable experiences.
- Although opportunities to consider equality and diversity issues occur in many lessons, they are not always exploited sufficiently to develop deeper understanding. A few teachers lack the confidence to challenge inappropriate comments or behaviour.

**Visual arts, media and communication****Learning programmes for 16-18****Learning programmes for 19+**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the good progress learners now make. The proportion of learners who successfully complete their courses has improved and the majority are now at or above the national average. Learners achieve high grades in the majority of subjects. Fashion and Textile learners make very good progress relative to their prior educational achievements. Many adult learners start their own small businesses and sell their work to the general public. Most of these learners started from a very low skills base.
- Teachers plan learning well. Interesting projects and challenging targets are set. Teachers provide appropriate advice and guidance to support learning effectively. Learners are aware of their progress and what is required to complete assignments or improve grades. Many learners succeed in gaining merit and distinction grades to be able to take up their first choice in higher education. Classroom management is good and teachers provide a respectful environment.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, well qualified and have high expectations of learners. The majority of teachers are practitioners in their field providing up-to-date knowledge to enhance learning. They support and guide learners to gain the skills required that increases learners' aspirations to progress to higher level education and into employment. Learners are motivated to continue work outside of college, further developing their skills and techniques to achieve learning goals.
- Learners of all abilities develop new skills and techniques quickly. During presentations of course work and classroom discussions learners' use of technical language demonstrates they have a clear understanding of correct terminology and phrases. English and mathematics are developed successfully in practical pattern making, media and photography. Learners write informed project documents and show good analytical and observation skills.
- The use of ILT to enhance learning is insufficiently developed in art and design sessions. A minority of teachers do not make innovative or imaginative use of the full capabilities of technology in practical sessions. Learners have access to industry standard resources across all the sites. Teachers use technology in media and photography sessions inventively.
- Assessment is fair and informs learning. Learners receive constant reinforcement and encouragement from teachers about their performance, standard of work and progress during theory and practical sessions.
- Advice and guidance for learners are effective. Learners are well supported through their applications for university and employment. Individual learning plans are completed comprehensively by teachers and learners and they regularly agree challenging targets; these are routinely monitored to inform learners of their progress.
- A significant strength of visual arts and media courses is the enrichment activities. A programme of guest speakers, field trips and visits complements learning very well and enables learners to apply their knowledge outside the classroom. This motivates them by broadening their horizons in a positive way. Teachers ensure learners gain experience through live projects and links with local businesses. Learners are encouraged to enter competitions and a few are successful in achieving prizes and awards.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity effectively. Many relevant projects can be seen in portfolios of work and teachers celebrate cultural diversity in lessons by drawing on the work of different artists, designers and film makers. Learners feel safe and work in an atmosphere of mutual respect for their peers and teachers.

## Foundation English

### Learning programmes for 16-18

### Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and this is reflected in the below average proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills English qualifications. While showing an improving trend over the last three years across most programmes too many learners do not achieve their qualification. The proportion of learners who successfully achieve their qualification for the adult literacy foundation and intermediate level and GCSE English programmes have significantly improved and are now at or exceed the national average. Fewer learners now leave their course early and most learners this year make satisfactory progress. Recent strategies to improve outcomes for functional skill learners are in their infancy and it is too early to judge impact.
- Many lessons are too teacher led, often providing little opportunity for learners to progress their skills within a range of contexts. Teachers plan a limited range of activities with insufficient content to interest and motivate learners. A minority of vocational teachers place too little emphasis on the development of specific skills, for example, using subject specific words correctly within relevant sector contexts. The pace of many lessons is slow and learners become bored. In the few good and sometimes outstanding lessons teachers use their skills to plan and teach a rich variety of practical activities, often including the entertaining use of technology to maximise opportunities for learners' progress and to build their confidence.
- Additional learning support provided by staff in lessons concentrates on helping learners with high priority support needs to improve their generic English skills. Teachers do not plan with support staff to ensure that learners' support for literacy is more directed to meet specific learning objectives of the lesson. The large majority of learners benefit from the accessibility of staff and are confident about receiving help should they need it.
- Learners make slow progress in the lessons where teachers do not take account of their different levels of ability when planning activities. In many cases, learners work on the same task at the same pace, regardless of their ability. In one learning session, learners that had already achieved level 1 in speaking and listening, repeated tasks at level 1 and were not challenged sufficiently to aspire to higher levels. Targets set for functional skill learners are too broad and relate to sitting assessment tests. Systems for monitoring learners' ongoing progress in functional skills sessions are underdeveloped.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. It provides useful information about learners' starting points and identifies the individual support they need to progress in lessons. However, this information is not consistently used by all teachers to personalise learning. Individual learning plans are not always used effectively to plan and set targets serving as small milestones to help the learners to progress towards their overall learning goal.
- Teachers' use of assessment strategies in many lessons are limited to group question and answer that does not check effectively the extent of individual learning. In the better lessons teachers provide their learners with varied opportunities to demonstrate their skills, that enables the teacher to provide instant further challenge through more complex tasks or questioning. Verbal and written feedback provided by most teachers are very helpful and most learners recognise the skills they are developing and those they need to practise further. Teachers attempt to correct learners' spelling and grammatical errors in their written work but not all errors are successfully identified and a few remain uncorrected.
- Teachers' promotion of equality and diversity is good in most lessons. Most teachers embed aspects routinely within lesson content and some teachers are skilled in developing naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' understanding to deeper levels. However, many

learners have superficial responses when their understanding is tested. Learners from a range of cultures and backgrounds work well together in sessions and a great deal of respect is demonstrated between them.

## Business management

### Learning programmes for 16-18

### Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment have led to improvements in the number of business learners who achieve their qualifications and this is now high. Learners on trade union education programmes are very successful. Learners develop good personal, social and employment related skills in vocational business, trade union education and business enterprise programmes.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their work and use their subject specialism and experience to plan and prepare good lessons. They use a wide range of activities that involve and interest learners. Learners have clear written individual targets in lessons that motivate many of them to aim to achieve high grades.
- In the best lessons, learners acquire a fluent understanding of business and employment related concepts. Teachers use whole class, small group, paired and individual methods that stimulate learners' interest successfully. Learners respond well, working conscientiously and diligently. Most learners work well on individual assignments, such as market research and sector analysis in business lessons. Business learners use the college's interactive learning facilities to help them develop good research and imaginative presentational skills. Many learners also derive great benefit from group discussions and activities, improving their confidence and understanding of how to negotiate with different people.
- In a large majority of lessons teachers make good links between theory and practice through reference to contemporary matters and themes. For example, intermediate level business learners discussed business ethics in relation to current corporate taxation concerns while advanced level business learners researched how significant new transport infrastructure changes are affecting local businesses. Trade union and business enterprise learners investigated the impact of recent employment legislation on organisations and employees.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to give time for learners to reflect on key topics, allowing lessons to lose pace, and spend too much time on one activity. In weaker lessons, learners who are often late disrupt the flow of activity and consequently all learners make slow progress.
- Assessment and feedback help learners make good progress. Teachers mark and return written work promptly and learners receive accurate, fair and constructive comments that help them improve. Learners have regular meetings with teachers to discuss their personal targets, which they find helpful. In a small minority of cases, targets are too general and learners are not clear about what to do to improve. Teachers check progress and understanding in lessons effectively, mainly through questions, tests and observation, but they sometimes do not challenge more able learners enough with deeper questioning.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance, both informally from teachers and through the college's specialist services. For example, current business learners receive dyslexia support and learners with visual impairment are being supported with high resolution computer screens that help them make good progress. Learners recognise that group or individual tutorials help them to develop a wider understanding of themselves and their position in society. The effective engagement of learning achievement coaches is helping to improve learners' attendance and reduce the proportion of learners who leave their course early.

- Teachers promote learners' understanding of numerical skills well by developing their competence in using spread-sheets, graphs and pie-charts as well as mathematical calculations in lessons, presentations and research assignments. Learners use business related technical language and specialist terms in lessons confidently. Teachers correct grammar and spelling in written work but this is not always done assiduously.
- Teachers promote a harmonious atmosphere in lessons and learners are respectful to each other. Equality and diversity themes are often embedded in lessons and learners address these well in assignments. In better lessons, such as in trade union education studies, teachers regularly refer to naturally occurring examples of equality and diversity to enrich their lessons but some teachers miss opportunities to do this so effectively.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The principal, governors and senior managers have brought a clear sense of purpose and direction to the recently merged Central College. The number of learners successfully completing their programme has improved steadily in the past two years from a very low base after the merger but still requires further improvement. Strong local links and partnerships, including the sponsorship of two academies, position the college to fulfil its ambitious vision to provide vocational learning from school age children to adults. Staff are involved in the business planning process and understand and support the strategic direction of the college.
- Governors bring a wide range of skills to the board. They are fully involved in shaping the college's strategy and provide sufficient challenge and support to senior managers. They meet very regularly and receive key reports containing sufficient detail to fulfil their role effectively.
- Improving teaching, learning and assessment is a priority for senior managers. All teachers have an annual graded observation that informs their appraisal and personal development plan. Many teachers have attended a number of staff development activities on teaching and learning and each department is supported by a recently appointed teaching and learning champion. However, the quality of teaching and learning, and outcomes for learners, still require improvement.
- Senior Managers have recently revised the staff appraisal, lesson observation and performance management processes. Teachers do not progress on the pay spine where their teaching is unsatisfactory, as part of the capability process. Teachers with less than good observation grades are supported to improve. Within work-based learning, the college has addressed the marginal performance of staff through effective performance management that has contributed to the improved progress of current learners.
- The self-assessment process involves all staff and contains appropriate moderation and validation procedures. However, its impact to raise standards varies considerably across subject areas. It is mostly accurate but action plans do not always lead to improvement. Governors are usefully involved in the process. Although subcontracted partners evaluate their provision, not all of them produce a self-assessment report; managers acknowledge this short-coming and have plans to ensure this takes place in the coming year.
- Management information is improved and managers are making better use of it. However, the self-assessment report acknowledges the need to improve target setting for courses at curriculum level.
- Managers and teachers gather and consider learners' views through surveys and learner forums. Managers use learners' feedback to inform self-assessment, but do not involve them directly in the process. The use of employer surveys is under-developed.
- Senior managers use termly performance review meetings to monitor the performance of departments and partners. However, actions to improve key areas of underperformance have

had variable success. For instance, retention on advanced courses has shown some improvement as a result of college actions but attendance remains below the college target.

- The functional skills strategy is not effective. Around half of all learners do not successfully complete their qualifications and most vocational areas perform poorly in functional skills. The strategy is not clear about where responsibility and ultimate accountability lie. It does not indicate in sufficient detail how departments may choose to deliver functional skills nor how managers will monitor what is working well to share best practice. Managers have revised the strategy for the next academic year.
- Teachers and managers have formed good local connections and strong ties with local authorities, the local enterprise partnership and extensive links with community organisations. They are in the process of re-shaping provision to provide a stronger focus around science, technology, engineering and maths to better meet the needs of learners and employers. While links with employers are good, not all learners have sufficient opportunities to gain work experience.
- Managers analyse equality and diversity data well and takes appropriate action to tackle under-performance. All staff receive training which is updated every three years. In addition the equality and diversity manager supports curriculum teams to engage learners more fully on equalities issues in their course. It is too early to gauge the impact of this work. Managers plan to extend the training to subcontracted partners.
- Managers carry out equality impact assessments for both formal college policies and key decisions such as developing or cancelling courses. However, the process is not as thorough for subcontracted provision.
- Statutory requirements for safeguarding learners are met in full. Managers maintain a comprehensive single central record that includes staff, contractors, governors and volunteers, including subcontracted provision. The college has three key designated safeguarding officers, and appropriate contacts at each site. Arrangements for looked after children are satisfactory and managers have good links with the local safeguarding board.
- All staff, including subcontractors, receive safeguarding training. Referrals are dealt with appropriately and on-going interventions by learner achievement coaches are recorded and dealt with swiftly. A safeguarding committee, which includes members of the partnership team, receive regular reports and report to governors.



## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Central College Nottingham

<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
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	3	3	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Health and social care</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Building and construction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Sport</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Media and communication</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Foundation English</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Business management</b>	<b>2</b>

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	617	294	876	481	1,759	877	5	23
Part-time	216	6,530	278	9,332	129	2,154	0	128
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	421	1,939	143	1,278	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	967							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Confetti</li> <li>■ White Rose</li> <li>■ Learning Curve</li> <li>■ Manatec</li> <li>■ Buttercups</li> <li>■ ELPIS Training</li> <li>■ Geason</li> <li>■ Mitre Training.</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

Central College Nottingham is a large general further education college with 14 sites within the Nottingham area. Just under half of all learners are aged 16 to 18. Over a quarter of learners are from a minority ethnic background, which is higher than the proportion in the local area. The proportion of the local population who hold no qualification is higher than the national average and about two thirds have achieved intermediate level qualifications. In 2012, the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at A\*-C, including English and mathematics, was significantly below the national average. Nottingham's ranking on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, making it one of the most deprived local authorities in England. Unemployment in the city is three percentage points above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Richard Pemble HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal (organisational development) 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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