

The Sheffield College

General further education college

Inspection dates		29 April–3 May 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Teaching, learning and assessment are mostly good. Much effective learning takes place outside of lessons and teachers and trainers rigorously monitor the achievement and progress of students and apprentices.
- Students benefit significantly from high quality, individualised support from teachers, trainers and specialist support staff. This support plays a crucial role in helping them to achieve.
- Leaders and managers of the college have demonstrated their ability to bring about significant improvements in the facilities, guidance and support experienced by students, and the impact of these is evident in the marked increases in success rates for most types of course.
- The college uses its excellent range of external partnerships very effectively to develop the curriculum, raise the aspirations of students and increase their employability.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Success rates are not yet high enough and students on advanced level courses make insufficient progress.
- Teaching and learning in a few curriculum areas require improvement and not all lessons challenge, stretch or inspire students sufficiently. Students do not experience outstanding lessons frequently enough.
- The further development of students' English and mathematical skills is not routine in all lessons or in workplace learning.
- Quality assurance and improvement arrangements have not yet secured consistently high outcomes and quality of provision across all curriculum areas and teachers.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by students, particularly on advanced level courses, by developing the skills of all teachers to plan more creative and inspiring lessons which involve students more actively and consistently provide appropriate stretch and challenge to students of all abilities.
- More strongly promote the development of students' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills; ensuring, for example, that teachers and trainers routinely correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Increase success rates to well above average by further developing and refining the arrangements for tracking and monitoring students' achievement and progress and supporting them to improve their work. Ensure tracking, monitoring, target-setting and intervention arrangements are adapted carefully to suit the needs of students at different levels and on different types of course.
- Relentlessly implement quality assurance and improvement arrangements to secure consistently high standards across all courses, curriculum areas and constituent colleges.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Success rates for most types of college-based courses have risen over the last two years and are now very close to national rates for similar colleges. The increase in success rates in 2012 was particularly significant across vocational and skills for life courses at foundation and intermediate level. The college has not yet had the same impact on success rates on advanced level courses; although, with the exception of AS-level courses, these, too, are at the national level.
- Last year saw a strong increase in the proportion of adult students completing their courses coupled with marked increases in the numbers of both 16- to 18-year-old and adult students achieving the qualifications they studied. College retention and achievement rates are now at the national level. Current in-year indicators of retention and early achievement suggest these improvements will continue.
- Success rates remain too variable between curriculum areas and too low on land-based courses, in hair and beauty and in hospitality and catering. On advanced level courses too many students do not make the progress expected of them given their levels of prior attainment when they started. Consequently, the proportion of students achieving high grades is low on many courses.
- Apprenticeship success rates last year were below national average for all age groups and require improvement. Equally, full apprenticeship framework completion within the planned time was too low. However, most current apprentices are making good progress relative to their starting points with particularly high rates of progress in sectors such as pharmacy and health and social care. Most apprentices' portfolios demonstrate good levels of competence and high standards of work.
- New arrangements to support vulnerable students have been extremely successful in closing previously significant achievement gaps between different groups of students. Although there is no difference within the college between levels of male and female achievement, female students achieve slightly less well than they do nationally. Students who have benefited from learning support now achieve at a slightly higher level than the college average. Different groups of apprentices achieve at a similar rate.

- Across all the constituent colleges, students behave very well and feel safe and secure. However, the college is very aware that students' attendance continues to require improvement, as does their punctuality to lessons in a few curriculum areas.
- Progression rates are good between different levels of study within the college, onto apprenticeships and into higher education. A sizeable proportion of students who come to the college to study foundation level courses succeed over several years in achieving advanced level qualifications. The college has started to track and monitor students' destinations more carefully once they leave the college. According to the data compiled, last year 91% of students completing full-time courses moved on to positive destinations.
- Students continue to develop more effective skills in English and mathematics alongside their main course. GCSE pass rates at grades A* to C in these subjects have improved and are now high. Students taking functional skills in English and mathematics are encouraged and supported to progress until they have achieved at intermediate level.
- The college's emphasis on preparing students for careers as well as qualifications has resulted in the strong promotion of employability skills. Large scale employability training, coherent work skills' progression routes, extensive provision of work experience and live project work for full-time students and the imaginative use of previous students and high profile professionals as role models to raise aspirations, all contribute to the heightened work readiness of students. Apprentices develop good vocational skills and improved personal and social competencies help them to make good progress.
- Students are encouraged to enter skills competitions across most curriculum areas with numerous examples of individual and team successes. Many students participate in enterprise activities and charitable fund-raising within the college.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Most college-based students acquire knowledge steadily and develop good academic and vocational skills because the majority of teaching and learning is good. The improved outcomes for students in many curriculum areas reflect, in particular, improvements in key assessment and support processes. However, in a minority of lessons teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to ensure that all students, especially those of middle and high ability, make rapid progress.
- The college's effective observation of the teaching and learning scheme has contributed to improvements, though inspectors judged a few lessons to be inadequate and not enough to be good or better in English and information and communication technology (ICT). The college is aware that the quality of aspects of teaching and learning vary across the college, so that students in some curriculum areas have a more positive learning experience and make better progress than others. It is now strengthening its arrangements for observing teaching and learning further, but it is too soon to judge the impact of this initiative.
- In the best lessons, enthusiastic teachers use their expertise to plan interesting and challenging activities that motivate students and stimulate learning. These teachers have high expectations of their students and pay close attention to their individual needs. They use skilful questioning techniques that challenge and stretch students with different levels of ability. Teachers often make particularly good use of class profiles of students to plan lessons. Students demonstrate a good recollection of knowledge from previous lessons and have enough confidence to ask questions or ask for help.
- In less effective lessons, teachers fail to plan learning around the needs of the students. They dominate lessons themselves and do not create opportunities for students to participate actively or demonstrate their learning. In these lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and students are not stretched enough to realise, over time, their full potential. Students on a minority of

advanced level programmes fail to achieve the highest grades or even the grade expected given their previous attainment.

- Apprentices receive off-the job training at the college which very effectively supports their progress and development. In the larger employers, apprentices receive timely work-based training which tutors link well to the requirements of the apprenticeship framework and which reinforces what they have learnt at college. However, not all employers fully contribute to apprentices' success through their comprehensive involvement in the planning, delivery and assessment of workplace training.
- Teachers and trainers are strongly supportive of their learners and have positive working relationships with them. They use their good subject knowledge and occupational expertise effectively to link theory to practice and to motivate and engage learners. Good teachers use a range of learning resources, including the college's virtual learning environment (VLE), to help students' to develop more independent learning skills. In a few curriculum areas and in workplace learning, teachers and trainers make insufficient use of the VLE for this purpose. In most lessons, learners display positive attitudes and learn productively. However, in a small minority of cases, poor punctuality or weak work readiness hampers progress at the start of lessons.
- Initial advice and guidance arrangements, led by the learner recruitment team, are effective in ensuring that most students enrol on courses that meet their needs, interests and aspirations. Arrangements for initial assessment and learning support are particularly good. Student services and learning support teams provide highly effective and timely support for students identified as requiring additional or specialist help to enable them to achieve. Students with specific learning needs benefit from good transition arrangements before enrolment. Apprentices receive a thorough initial assessment of their skills that accurately identifies their current levels of experience and learning as well as their aspirations. However, the subsequent planning of individualised learning for apprentices is not consistently effective.
- Teachers monitor students' progress on their main course well and support them to achieve through the setting of appropriately challenging targets. Tutor mentors and learner success managers provide full-time students with comprehensive tutorial support. The information technology system, ProMonitor, is used to good effect in recording students' attendance and achievement, setting targets and sharing concerns. Tutor mentors use this information constructively and swiftly to identify and support students at risk of leaving their course early or follow up dips in performance or behaviour. However, not all curriculum areas consistently apply the best practice in these arrangements.
- Teachers mostly provide constructive and helpful comments on students' work. Students are aware of their target grades and the progress they have made. Teachers use assessment well to stretch the most able students and to help them make progress towards their target grades. Students correctly suggest that, in a small minority of cases, teachers do not provide sufficiently detailed or frequent comments on their work and consequently they do not know clearly enough what they have to do to improve further.
- Assessment for apprentices is frequent and ensures they are able to gain quickly recognition of their competence which further motivates them. The monitoring of apprentices' progress is effective and is making a valuable contribution to improving the rate at which they succeed.
- The development of students' English and mathematical skills is satisfactory in most curriculum areas, including in work-based learning. Most teachers identify and correct students' spelling, punctuation and grammar, but not all teachers do this thoroughly enough. Most students develop good specialist vocabulary related to the subject they are studying and use it confidently in their written work.
- The college provides an inclusive and positive learning environment and teachers in most subject areas recognise and take appropriate opportunities to promote equality and diversity during lessons. Students treat each other with respect and courtesy during lessons. In some curriculum areas, such as in employability training and in provision for students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities, an ethos of celebrating inclusion and diversity is very evident. However, teachers and trainers in sport and construction fail to exploit fully opportunities to integrate equality themes within the curriculum.

- Support for students is comprehensive, strong and often very successful in enabling students to remain on their course. Many students overcome significant barriers to learning and progress from foundation through to advanced level courses. Whenever appropriate, students are referred to specialist agencies for further support in overcoming their difficulties.

Health and social care

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- The steady rise in the number of students completing their course and gaining the qualification reflects the good teaching, learning and assessment in this area. The behaviour of students is good and they are respectful and attentive.
- Teachers' good lesson preparation results in the majority of lessons actively engaging students and developing their learning through carefully planned activities and skilled questioning. Teachers are very supportive and foster positive relationships that nurture students' development of confidence. They are encouraged to share their own experiences and learn from each other. They develop good understanding of key concepts such as the importance of treating all clients with dignity and respect.
- A small minority of lessons are too teacher-centred. In these lessons students remain passive for long stretches of time. Teachers pay insufficient attention to meeting the needs of all students and rely too much on closed questioning. Consequently, good opportunities to develop and extend students' understanding are ignored and students, particularly the most able, are not stretched or challenged sufficiently.
- Advice and guidance arrangements coupled with robust initial assessment ensure that students enrol on the right course at the correct level. Students are actively involved in the process of setting themselves demanding targets and teachers subsequently challenge them to meet or exceed these targets. Teachers and tutors rigorously monitor their progress. This ethos is reinforced in most lessons where teaching and learning are planned to support them to gain higher grades in assignments. This approach promotes the successful progression of advanced level students to university, typically to study midwifery, adult nursing, occupational therapy and criminology.
- Teachers provide clear verbal and written feedback on students' work and this enables students to improve their assignments and achieve at a level which allows them to progress to higher levels of study. Similarly, teachers and employers provide regular feedback on students' performance in the workplace, which helps the students to improve their practice.
- Extensive collaboration with care providers ensures that excellent and sufficient work placements are available to students in a variety of settings, including teaching hospitals, children's hospices and kidney dialysis units. From these, students usually gain the practical skills they need to stand out from the crowd. Support for students in these settings is strong. Additionally, they often result in an offer of part-time employment, which can provide some students with a critical opportunity to finance further studies.
- Staff quickly identify students at risk of underachieving and put appropriate interventions in place to support them. Tutor mentors offer valuable careers advice and students have a very clear understanding of the different career pathways available to them. Support for students with personal problems is highly effective and often critical in enabling them to complete their course. When students experience difficulties with their coursework, teachers provide valuable guidance, by telephone or email if the student is not in college.

- Teachers do not focus sufficiently on the development of students’ skills in English and mathematics and miss good opportunities to reinforce them in lessons. The development of mathematical skills in a lesson in which students measured pulse rates and body temperature was an exception rather than the rule. In a very small minority of lessons teachers develop students’ abilities in useful study skills such as skimming and scanning documents for research purposes.
- Students display a good understanding of key equality and diversity concepts. They listen to each other with respect and value each other’s opinions. They have a clear appreciation of discrimination and stereotyping and the negative effects that these can have on individuals. They understand the importance of meeting individual needs and can apply this to their learning. For example, they understand the importance of meeting the dietary needs of those with certain medical conditions or from different religious groups; they know that it is necessary to adopt different approaches to manage challenging behaviour in those with autism.

Construction Apprenticeships Other work based learning	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment for construction apprentices are good, both on- and off-the job. This has resulted in high success rates and completion of the apprenticeship qualifications within the planned timescale. Teachers and assessor/reviewers successfully encourage apprentices to reach and consistently demonstrate high standards in their practical work.
- Knowledgeable assessor/reviewers take pride in the quality of support they provide to apprentices. They motivate apprentices well and ensure they develop high aspirations for themselves. Consequently, learners make good progress in completing all aspects of the apprenticeship framework. Assessor/reviewers assess apprentices’ work thoroughly. Their verbal feedback is supportive, constructive and helps apprentices understand how to improve.
- Apprentices develop good personal, social and employability skills which improves their effectiveness in the workplace. For example, one plumbing and heating apprentice working on a domestic property with a gas leak, accurately diagnosed the problem, understood how to order the part and sensitively managed the difficult task of informing the house owner that the gas needed to be cut off for two days.
- Most apprentices demonstrate work of a good, and occasionally excellent, standard. Teachers make good use of their own and apprentices’ knowledge and industrial experience to help them to relate theory to practice. Routine checking of apprentices’ understanding in all activities confirms learning is taking place. However, inconsistencies in the quality of theory lessons, in the use of e-portfolios and in the tracking of learners’ progress through ProMonitor mean that not all apprentices benefit from the best practices evident in some crafts and departments.
- In sessions which are thoroughly planned, apprentices participate in a wide variety of activities. For example, in one carpentry session, apprentices calculated quantities and costs for flooring, doors and windows and then placed orders with suppliers. This session motivated and engaged all apprentices, with learning activities expertly facilitated by the teacher who regularly checked learning through challenging questioning of each apprentice.
- Resources for learning are generally good. Teachers are well qualified for their roles and well supported through professional development. Apprentices have good access to learning resources, including course materials, e-portfolios and records of their own progress through the college’s VLE. However, the quality of the plumbing, heating and ventilation workshops is poor and their need for refurbishment colours the learning experience of apprentices using them.
- Apprentices largely succeed in achieving the functional skills literacy qualification required by the framework. However, apprentices capable of achieving functional skills at a higher or

broader level do not get the opportunity. Only rarely do teachers or assessor/reviewers see opportunities to develop further apprentices' literacy or numeracy skills, even through simply correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation.

- Good initial advice and guidance, coupled with thorough inductions, help apprentices to settle into their programmes quickly. Apprentices in plumbing benefit from teachers putting on additional evening classes to help them catch up with missed work. Thorough exit interviews by staff support good progression from apprenticeship to advanced level study.
- Strong collaboration and working links between the college and construction employers has facilitated good coordination between apprentices on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices and employers speak highly of the thoroughness, good communications and frequent interventions of assessor/reviewers which provide apprentices with the right pace and challenge to ensure they can demonstrate and provide evidence of their competence in the workplace. However, targets intended to help learners improve are not specific enough to provide the degree of direction needed by a minority of struggling apprentices.
- Staff do not give sufficient priority to helping develop apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity during taught sessions and reviews. When done well, their approach very clearly raises learners' awareness. For example, during an on-site review, a plumbing apprentice was asked to consider what he would do differently if a disabled person lived in the house where he was installing a bathroom. His awareness of equality and diversity developed through considering pull/grab handles, wet room showers and wider door openings. However, too little use is made of examples specific to construction to extend apprentices' understanding.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Although success rates have improved over the last three years and are now just at the national level, teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Students do not make as much progress as they are capable of making and so too few achieve high grades.
- Teachers' planning of lessons is only partially successful. It ensures that students cover the required ground and do so through a mixture of teacher-led exposition and discussion combined with plentiful opportunities for students to practise and extend their skills by working individually. Students demonstrate their competency in using commercial software packages and clearly understand and use technical terminology accurately. They make frequent and extensive use of the VLE, both within lessons and to continue their studies outside of the classroom.
- However, too many lessons require improvement. Lessons often provide too limited a variety of learning activities to keep student fully engaged. Teachers give insufficient attention to differentiating lesson objectives, tasks and questioning in order to provide each learner with the right amount of challenge. More-able students in particular are not sufficiently encouraged or stretched to reach higher standards. The use of information learning technology (ILT) in lessons is largely unimaginative; for example, the main use made of interactive whiteboards is simply for projecting written information.
- Teachers' support for students is nevertheless effective in helping them to achieve their qualification. Within lessons, teachers support students to build upon their previous knowledge and skills to improve their understanding and ability in using both software and hardware. Teachers provide timely and personalised support for students falling behind with their studies, which is usually sufficient to keep them on track.
- Additional learning support also plays a valuable role in supporting students to achieve. Teachers use information from initial assessment about students' individual support needs well to make necessary adjustments or provide additional resources. Tutor mentors develop and

maintain constructive relationships with students and provide valuable assistance on personal or progression matters. They are adept at identifying students whose behaviour or performance indicates that they may be at risk of withdrawal and providing further support, encouragement and motivation which students strongly appreciate.

- Teachers mostly provide feedback to students on their assignments that is sufficiently detailed and clear to leave students aware about what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. However, target-setting within progress reviews requires further improvement. Targets set are too often limited to meeting deadlines or the essential requirements of a unit of study, and do not provide the stepping stones to help students rectify deficiencies in their knowledge and understanding or improve specific skills.
- Students attend discrete lessons to develop their English and mathematical skills. However, the planning of these lessons is not sufficiently informed by the content of students' vocational courses to help them fully appreciate their value or to add to their vocational competence. Teachers of ICT lessons do not systematically identify and exploit opportunities to develop these skills during learning activities.
- Information, advice and guidance are thorough. Good links with schools enable teachers to take students' predicted grades, behaviour and attendance into account, along with their interests and aspirations, before they offer them a place on the most appropriate course. Pre-enrolment activities provide prospective students with further reassurance that the course is the most suitable for them. Comprehensive college and course induction arrangements ensure that students have a thorough insight into life at the college and the expectations of their course.
- Students behave very well and show respect towards each other and staff. Students witness the celebration of inclusivity and diversity across the college and consider these topics within the tutorial system, but equality and diversity themes do not feature strongly within ICT lessons. Induction and systematic awareness-raising displays mean that students understand how they should operate in order to stay safe when working or communicating online.

Sport and public services

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This is contributing to improving success rates which are now around the national level on most courses.
- In the best lessons, teachers' planning of learning considers the needs of individual students well. Teachers use a range of well-paced, engaging and active teaching strategies to involve and motivate students. They use effective questioning techniques to check students' understanding of key concepts and provide good levels of stretch and challenge. They use resources creatively to support learning. As a result, students make good progress. For example, in one A-level sport lesson, students worked collaboratively on team challenges and were able to explain confidently how relevant theory informs and influences group cohesion and team performance.
- Classroom-based lessons on public services courses are too often dominated by the teacher, which means that students learn very passively and make slower progress. However, opportunities for the same students to apply their knowledge and understanding outside the classroom are excellent. Supported by teachers with strong vocational experience, they participate in a wide range of external activities which enable them to develop and enhance their skills well. Working with both the military and emergency services, public services students at all levels participate in a varied programme of events gaining valuable experience. For example, they have evaluated responses to major incidents, operated fire fighting equipment and developed leadership skills on overnight expeditions.

- A good range of physical resources support the development of sports students’ practical skills well. Students develop their confidence, communication and employability skills through relevant work experience placements. A wide range of effective partnerships are well established with professional football, rugby and basketball clubs and the Princes’ Trust, to provide students with volunteering, coaching and mentoring opportunities. Teachers invest much time and effort in promoting and maintaining competitive team sports and students regularly participate in inter-college fixtures. The vast majority of sports students successfully develop their wider personal and employability skills by completing a range of appropriate short courses in personal fitness, first aid, sport leadership and pool lifeguarding.
- Students value the good level of care, guidance and support they receive from college staff. Arrangements to track and monitor students’ attendance, achievement and progress are frequent, systematic and effective in identifying and supporting those at risk of not completing their studies. Students have high aspirations and understand what they need to do to be successful and to progress to higher-level study or employment. Support for students with additional needs is timely and appropriate and leads to good levels of achievement.
- Teachers use a good range of assessment methods to check students’ knowledge, skills and understanding regularly. The innovative use of assessment workbooks on public services courses is effective in supporting good levels of progress and high grade achievement. The majority of written feedback is detailed and provides useful guidance to help students improve. Targets for improvement on vocational sports courses are not always sufficiently clear and challenging to promote achievement of the highest grades.
- Teachers make consistent use of the arrangements for initial assessment of students’ previous attainment and support needs to inform their planning of learning so that it meets individual student needs. Opportunities to integrate the development of students’ English skills are recognised and taken in the majority of lessons, with teachers reinforcing the importance of key terminology and accurate spelling and grammar. However, in the large majority of lessons teachers do not exploit similar opportunities to develop students’ mathematical skills.
- Students’ understanding of equality and diversity themes is limited. Teachers do not always integrate aspects of equality and diversity into lessons fully to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive practice. Students are well behaved and demonstrate good levels of mutual respect.

English Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+	Requires improvement
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Success rates are generally improving and are now broadly in line with national averages but the number of high grades achieved is low on advanced level courses. The progress students make in relation to their relatively high prior attainment is insufficient and varies significantly between courses and classes. This is reflected in the quality of teaching and learning, where some effective teaching sits alongside too many lessons that are inadequate or require improvement.
- In the better lessons, students make good progress and the standard of work is high for their level of study. In these lessons, the development of the students’ analytical skills and their use of linguistic and literary terminology are excellent. In an AS English literature lesson, students offered insightful and imaginative interpretations of Maya Angelou’s poetry that demonstrated clear progress since the beginning of the year.
- In some GCSE English lessons, the strong focus on developing the students’ creative writing skills, based on contemporary topics, is helping them make good progress. The standard of writing in many GCSE lessons is in line with expectations as the exam approaches. In one GCSE lesson, the standard of descriptive vocabulary generated from an extremely well-designed peer

writing exercise was exemplary.

- However, too many lessons are teacher led, lack creativity and fail to enthuse students or engage them to participate actively. In these lessons, students are passive and not encouraged to contribute to discussions and activities in a meaningful way. As a result, the progress made by less confident and more reticent students is often restricted.
- While exam preparation is a useful focus of many lessons, teachers fail to capture the interests and imagination of students in a way that motivates them to make sufficient progress during revision activities. Some activities in advanced level lessons are unambitious and do not challenge students to exceed their target grades. These lessons result in work that is, at best, in line with target grades but sometimes below the standard expected.
- Assessment of learning in lessons varies considerably. In better lessons, activities incorporate a wide range of assessment strategies to monitor the progress of individuals and this informs targeted support and challenge. However, some superficial and unchallenging questioning limits independent thought and leads to responses from students that lack depth and rigour. In most lessons, assessment of individual student progress does not result in differentiated activities to meet the needs of all students.
- Learning resources focus strongly on examination preparation and some students benefit from lively and interesting materials. The blended learning study guides used to teach online qualifications are particularly innovative, but not fully shared with teachers of classroom-based courses, where resources are less inspiring. The organisation of students' files is often good and demonstrates a pride in learning. Classroom displays are unimaginative and do not celebrate the work of students or provide a stimulating learning environment.
- Students value the informal support offered by teachers if they need further help outside of lessons. There are some opportunities for extra revision classes and workshops but the scope and breadth of these is limited. Students' attendance is monitored carefully, but systems for tracking their progress are still under development.
- Many students benefit from detailed verbal and written feedback in lessons and on homework tasks. Students appreciate the fact that homework is marked carefully and returned promptly. As a result, most students know what they need to do to improve their written work. Good initial advice and guidance result in students enrolling on suitable programmes of study and students appreciate the pre-course information they are given through taster days and open events.
- The emphasis placed on developing the students' literacy skills is very good in many GCSE English lessons. Teachers correct errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation carefully and, consequently, the standard of spelling in written work has noticeably improved since the beginning of the year. In addition, teachers often explore unfamiliar words with students and many students are developing well this year in their use of more complex vocabulary.
- Students enjoy the enrichment activities that are available to them, including theatre trips and links with local universities. The student-led college magazine offers a good opportunity for English students to work collaboratively to produce a high quality publication that gives them pride.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. English literature texts cover a broad range of themes, which encourage students to celebrate and respect individual differences. In English language lessons, students explore how language relates to gender and ethnicity. Consequently, students show mutual respect and tolerance for each other in lessons.

Independent living and leisure skills**Learning programmes for 16-18****Learning programmes for 19+**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This leads to the high qualification success rates, good rates of progression to the next level of course or employment, and the very significant development of students' communication, social and employability skills. Teachers have consistently high expectations of all students, whatever their ability levels or their complex needs. Students enjoy their learning and make good progress in lessons.
- Students develop good practical and vocational skills through a broad range of activities that enrich their lives and extend their horizons; for example, in horse care and through gardening work in the Botanical Gardens. Enterprise activities, through the sale of cards and artwork in the college Gallery, for example, help students develop effective retailing skills. Work experience for students at entry level 3 offers real opportunities to develop employability skills and these placements enhance independence and establish contacts that in many cases lead directly to paid or voluntary employment.
- Passionate and skilled teachers motivate and inspire students. They know their students very well and make good use of both initial assessment and information provided by the feeder special school to tailor programmes to meet individual needs. The use of skilful questioning techniques ensures that all students are involved and properly challenged. Classroom activities are well structured and students enjoy a range of activities that are stimulating and varied, keeping them motivated and engaged. However, existing organisational structures do not allow for easy sharing of best practice.
- In a gardening lesson, students with profound learning difficulties were encouraged to recall previous learning, to think, to correct themselves and to apply their understanding to new tasks, around the naming of unfamiliar fruit and vegetables. In another lesson, students used tablet computers and specific applications with confidence and developed understanding and dexterity through gaming. In the majority of lessons, however, ILT is not used and teachers do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to learn, to research and to apply technology.
- Staff provide outstanding support for students. Teachers plan carefully for both personal and additional support and coordinate the work of learning support assistants and other support staff very well. As a result, students are making good and sustained progress. Very effective behaviour management helps students learn to manage their own behaviour.
- Assessment of learning is good. Individual learning and progression plans are clear and establish appropriate targets. Both students and staff accurately record progress against targets at the end of each lesson. Verbal feedback to students is particularly good, and students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In some lessons, however, teachers do not record students' progress in English and mathematics, limiting students' development in these important functional skills.
- Information, advice and guidance are good and particularly strong at the start of the learner journey. Teachers provide students and their parents with clear information about what choices are available within the college programme. Throughout the course and at the end of the year, a range of carefully considered next step options is provided, with other agencies on hand to provide specialist advice where needed.
- The promotion of health and safety is extremely effective. Students have good awareness of the hazards in all learning activities; with horses in the stables, using farm machinery and tools at the farm, with knives in the kitchen. Students feel very safe and gain independence, when appropriate, through the development of safe travelling to college, to the workplace and back home.
- Learning takes place in a very inclusive environment, where teachers manage behaviour skilfully to ensure respect for each individual. The annual residential activity establishes good team

working and develops a strong ethos of caring and support for others. Careful integration of equality and diversity themes into the curriculum ensures that students become sensitive to the needs of others and understand the appropriate behaviour to use in a range of circumstances.

Employability training

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- The high and increasing number of learners progressing into employment reflects the good teaching, learning and assessment in this area. In the best sessions teachers make good use of a range of learning strategies to develop and extend both learners' work-related skills and their development of literacy, numeracy and language skills. In one session learners role-played providing security and managing conflict at a nightclub, which required them to communicate using handheld radios and search and disarm a nightclub client. This helped them to develop highly appropriate work-related skills such as active listening very effectively. Learning activities progressively build on previous knowledge and learning, developing learners' confidence and personal and social skills.
- Learners extend their skills through participation in challenging activities in the majority of lessons. Teachers often demonstrate high expectations and provide appropriate stretch and challenge for all learners. In a pre-entry route to employment session for speakers of English as a second language (ESOL), highly effective written activities supported the development of vocabulary about parts of the body. Paired and group activities supported collaborative learning and the effective use of targeted questions assessed and confirmed learning and measured the progress made by each learner. Learners on an intermediate course preparing for employment in a contact centre were encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and use of spoken language and their impact on customers.
- Teachers use ILT creatively to actively engage and motivate learners. For example, in a pre-entry employability ESOL session, internet images of different times of day were shown so that learners could practice matching the appropriate greeting to them. In a small minority of lessons learning is less effective. Activities are not planned carefully to take sufficient account of the different needs of individual learners. As a result, these sessions are too teacher led, limiting the progress learners make. Learners on employability courses at other locations do not benefit from the sharing of good teaching practices at City College and Hillsborough Barracks.
- Assessment of learning is good. Teachers check learners' work frequently and provide detailed feedback on both oral and written activities. Marked work provides comprehensive written feedback on what the learner needs to do to improve. For example, detailed written feedback to learners on a course supporting them to set up and run their own businesses clearly identified which aspects of planning each had covered well, which needed greater consideration, and how the learner might go about more comprehensively evaluating their options.
- Initial assessment is robust. Systematic and comprehensive assessment for learners informs the clear focus on developing their skills in English and mathematics in ways which are linked to employment goals. In the majority of lessons teachers use the outcomes of initial assessments to inform their planning of learning. In an entry level ESOL session, for example, the teacher routinely corrected and modelled errors in pronunciation, with learners asked to pronounce, spell and note words they had mispronounced, reinforcing the correct use of the spoken and written word. However not all staff routinely identify or correct spelling and grammatical errors.
- Teachers regularly review and update each learner's individual learning plan. This frequent monitoring of learners' performance and progress ensures that planned assessments build on and extend learning for all learners. Where planning is less effective it does not fully take account of the literacy and numeracy levels of each learner, leading to missed opportunities to extend and consolidate their development of English and mathematical skills.

- Information, advice and guidance are very good and learners value highly the timely advice and guidance available to them at the college and through the college's strong partnerships with Job Centre Plus and a range of local employers. On the course preparing learners to work in a contact centre, the recruitment manager attends the penultimate session of the course to support learners in preparation for the interview which is a guaranteed outcome of the course.
- Teachers sensitively manage collaborative working within groups with diverse cultural backgrounds. Learners are actively encouraged to recognise and respect each other's values and beliefs creating an inclusive culture in which diversity is celebrated. The strong focus on removing barriers to employment permeates all aspects of each course.

Business

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are mostly good, although the success rates, which are slightly below the national average, do not yet reflect this. Students work hard in developing good business and financial management skills alongside good critical analysis, problem-solving and keyboarding skills. Students develop good employability skills. They are confident, communicate well with their peers and take pride in producing business documents and financial records to high professional standards.
- Enthusiastic finance teachers use their own business experience well to develop students' good understanding of accounting principles. Good use is made of guest speakers from successful local businesses, including past students, to motivate and inspire students to achieve.
- Most teachers prepare lessons well and plan a wide range of stimulating activities that engage and challenge students. Good use is made of students' workplace experiences to help them improve their knowledge and understanding of financial control systems and the use and purpose of different business documents. A small minority of lessons do not challenge students sufficiently. In these lessons the pace of learning is too slow and teachers do not check how well each student understands the topic sufficiently.
- Innovative use of mini-whiteboards in one lesson enabled students to monitor the progress they made towards understanding learning outcomes when revising for examinations. Business students are well motivated and able, for example, to complete complex financial control tasks confidently and accurately.
- Students receive good verbal feedback on their contribution and work in lessons and most teachers provide very supportive, comprehensive and constructive written feedback on students' written work which helps them to improve their grades. Students are motivated to try to achieve high grades and many do so. Significantly more current students are achieving high grades compared with previous years.
- Support for students is good. Good information and advice prior to enrolment ensures that students commence courses at the right level which are the most suitable to meet their aspirations. Their initial standards in using English and mathematics are assessed and where appropriate students attend lessons to further develop these skills. Timely careers advice and guidance help them make decisions about progression opportunities. Occasionally, teachers do not consider the sequencing of students' skills development carefully enough. For example, the assessment of some adult students' spreadsheet skills happens too late to identify and address individual areas for development in sufficient time to ensure they can complete assignments successfully.
- Teachers, learning support staff and tutor mentors support students well. Students benefit from frequent individual tutorials which review the progress they are making towards achieving their learning targets, their attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Teachers and tutor mentors use ProMonitor well to track students' progress. Tutors encourage students to construct their own

challenging targets and take personal responsibility for improving their attendance and punctuality. In most instances learning support staff have good subject knowledge and work closely with teachers, consequently, the support they provide in lessons is highly effective.

- Links with local businesses are good. Students in the Peter Jones Enterprise Academy collaborate on projects with a wide range of businesses to help develop their entrepreneurial skills. For example, groups of students are helping to design a prototype tent and gazebo suited to children and pets. Many students benefit from work placement and work shadowing. They achieve a wide range of relevant, additional qualifications such as professional finance awards, keyboard speed skills and audio typing, which further enhance their employability.
- Students treat each other with respect and value the opinions of their peers. However, too few teachers focus sufficiently in lessons on helping students to improve their skills in English and mathematics or on developing their awareness and understanding of equality and diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders work together very effectively to improve provision and also play key roles in local and regional developments. The college is now much more proactive externally and partnership arrangements are highly effective at providing benefit for students and the local economy. The college has successfully addressed most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, some of which are now strengths, and the college's finances have improved significantly.
- Management strategies secured a marked increase in success rates at foundation and intermediate levels for both age groups in 2012, including on Skills for Life provision where there was significant underperformance. Current quality improvement plans focus strongly on the remaining areas for development in learners' outcomes at advanced level and for apprenticeships. Indicators to date for this year show a continuation of the upward trend.
- Senior leaders carried out a wide-ranging consultation on the development of the strategic framework, internally with college staff and externally with more than 100 key stakeholders. All staff understand the values and the five strategic themes of excellence, employability, enterprise, engagement and E-enabled. The management structure provides clear lines of accountability between the executive team, assistant principals and heads of department. Communications across the college are good.
- Governors have enhanced their role, as providers of challenge as well as support, for all aspects of college provision. When there are vacancies to fill, skills audits and targeted recruitment help to ensure the skills of the governing body are wide ranging and appropriate. Governors know the college well. They have a detailed understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They are also using their individual knowledge and expertise to support the college in its strategies, for example in the development of employability programmes.
- The chief executive places a very strong focus on teaching and learning and has led the strategy in this area. Staff and students contributed to the newly developed teaching and learning framework, which links closely to a cross-college programme of staff development and increased levels of sharing of good practice across all the local colleges. Staff are very positive about these developments. There is still too much variation in practice, but as the framework emerged very recently it is too early to see its full impact.
- New, more robust performance management arrangements were developed and implemented in 2011. Expectations of staff are clearer and the process clearly links together individual targets, college targets and continuing professional development. Managers find the new process better for celebrating strong performance as well as more effective for dealing with weaker performance, and supporting and challenging colleagues.
- Staff at all levels are involved in the self-assessment process and are more adept at using success rate data to support and inform judgements. Managers also use other information, such as students' views and outcomes from lesson observations to provide supporting evidence for

judgements. Managers regularly review and update their quality improvement plans. While there are still variations in quality between subjects at each local college, there is greater sharing of good practice and consistency of performance between the colleges.

- The scrutiny of work-based learning by governors and managers has rightly placed a greater emphasis on driving up performance through tighter monitoring on the ground and providing apprentices with greater challenge. This is effectively addressing the decline in apprenticeship success rates and shortfalls in training quality. Managers are making suitable use of benchmarking data to set challenging targets for improvement. The college has adopted an appropriate management structure to support training delivery and quality improvement.
- Senior managers have developed a well-thought-out curriculum blueprint. This translates the strategic vision for the college into aspirational standards for all departments to reach. Highly effective partnerships with a variety of external organisations provide excellent opportunities for learners. For example, college staff and local schools for 11- to 16-year-olds have developed joint post-16 provision which has increased participation and raised students' aspirations. The college has forged productive links with employers to provide specialist training, widen participation and offer progression routes to raise local skill levels. Recent curriculum developments include bakery and butchery courses for a supermarket chain and National Health Service pharmacy courses.
- Staff, particularly the student development officers, develop a wide range of activities to raise students' awareness and understanding of the college's diverse community. An atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect permeates all college premises. Students behave very well inside and outside lessons. On many courses, but not all, equality and diversity themes are well integrated into teaching and learning.
- Managers use a good range of data to analyse the performance of different groups of learners. Strategies put in place to address achievement gaps for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for certain minority ethnic groups have been extremely effective in eradicating those gaps. Recent actions have also successfully addressed the previously low proportion of learners recruited from minority ethnic communities to apprenticeships.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. Students find the college to be a safe and welcoming environment. Strong health and safety practices are in place to cover learners working away from the college site, such as apprentices and students on work placements, as well as those on college premises. Well-informed and highly effective support strategies are in place to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Sheffield 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	2	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Building services	2
Construction crafts	2
ICT for users	3
ICT for practitioners	3
Sport	2
Public Services	2
English	3

Independent living and leisure skills	2
Employability training	2
Business	2

Provider details

Sheffield College	
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 7,015
	Part-time: 16,292
Principal/CEO	Heather MacDonald
Date of previous inspection	March 2010
Website address	www.sheffcol.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	1,024	176	1,166	143	3,331	834	54	179
Part-time	757	5,100	523	6,440	359	1,022	33	287
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	350	386	208	224	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	545							
Number of community learners	0							
Number of employability learners	1,683							
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"> ■ The Skills Network ■ NCC Skills Ltd ■ GSS (Gao-Shan Security Ltd) ■ RME Consultancy Limited ■ Remploy Employment Services ■ The Prince’s Initiative for Mature Enterprise (PRIME) ■ SOAR (Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration) ■ D C Training & Development Services Ltd ■ Brinsworth Academy of Engineering 							

- Yemeni Community Association (Sheffield) Ltd and 13 other subcontractors

Additional socio-economic information

The college serves the city of Sheffield and its wider City Region. Sheffield, situated on the Derbyshire and Yorkshire borders, is the third largest metropolitan district in England and has a population of 555,000. The relatively low attainment of school leavers in Sheffield improved markedly in 2012 when 55.6% of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics compared to 59% nationally. Unemployment in the city, including youth unemployment, and the proportion of adults without any formal qualification are above national averages. On the other hand, at each level of study, a slightly higher proportion of Sheffield residents do have qualifications than is the case nationally. The local economy retains a strong advanced manufacturing sector but most employment is in the service sector, particularly in healthcare, business, financial services and education. The college, one of the largest in England, is organised into three 'local' colleges - City, Hillsborough, Norton/Peaks - each with its own principal.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

John Evans HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the Executive Director for Student Experience 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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