

Halesowen College

General further education college

Inspection dates		3–7 June 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
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:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and the effectiveness of leadership and management are all good. Most learners attain their learning goals and many make good progress.
- The college provides a harmonious environment for learning. Learners are respectful, confident and have well developed personal skills. Learners from most minority ethnic groups achieve successful outcomes which are similar to the average for the college.
- Support for learners is highly beneficial and well-focused on helping them make good progress.
- The range of courses is broad and meets the needs of learners particularly well. Learners are well prepared for progression onto higher learning or into employment and progression rates are high.
- The exceptionally productive links with schools help to raise pupils' aspirations and enable them to be successful at college.
- Governors, leaders and managers have ensured that their ambitious vision provides good quality education and training. They have created a culture which places learners' success at its heart.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment does not ensure that all students make sufficiently good progress in all subjects.
- A minority of lessons lack sufficient challenge and appropriate questioning techniques to stimulate and check students' learning most effectively, especially for more able learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is underdeveloped. Actions for improvement are not sufficiently targeted at narrowing the achievement gap between groups of learners.
- Improvement plans sometimes lack sufficient measurable targets against which progress and success can be monitored.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that questioning techniques always test learning effectively. Use them to develop learning fully, especially for more able learners, and to enable learners to always probe subjects in sufficient depth. Ensure that learning is always checked fully and that questioning techniques do not allow a minority of learners to contribute most of the responses. Compose questions and target them at learners skilfully so that their ability to critically analyse topics is always developed well.
- Ensure that planning for lessons is always thorough so that lessons fully meet the needs of learners, including the most able, by providing appropriate levels of pace and challenge. Ensure that lessons are always well-structured, interesting, sufficiently brisk and tailored to meet the needs of each learner.
- Accelerate learners’ progress by ensuring that all learners are actively involved in lessons. Provide appropriate learning experiences to ensure that learners’ practical skills are developed to a consistently good standard in all subjects. Create opportunities for learners to participate actively throughout lessons by using a range of activities to stimulate their thinking, involvement and contribution.
- Broaden learners’ understanding of equality and diversity by promoting them more frequently and effectively in lessons.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is analysed rigorously and that sufficient focus is placed on evaluating the quality of learning during lesson observations. Ensure that planning to improve lessons is focused sufficiently on learning.
- Quicken the pace of improvement in particular areas, such as achievement gaps, by prioritising and targeting actions appropriately and by ensuring that action plans for improvement always contain clear and measurable targets. Monitor the progress made in achieving targets frequently.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners are achieving well and the majority make good progress. They develop valuable skills which help to prepare them well for employment such as being confident and articulate communicators. Many learners are good at team working and problem solving and they develop a range of useful vocational skills to a good standard. For example, drama learners work insightfully on creating directors’ instructions for plays and sports learners evaluate thoroughly training programmes to optimise professional performance in a range of sports. Learners studying textiles demonstrate innovative design skills and their well-developed technical skills when making a range of garments.
- Learners enjoy their courses and have good attendance and punctuality. The college places high importance on ensuring that learners have the opportunity to thrive in a welcoming environment.
- Learners demonstrate very good personal and social skills in lessons and when engaging with students, staff and visitors more widely at college. Their behaviour is exemplary. Such skills contribute to their success in higher education or employment after leaving college. Learners have a good understanding of careers and the progression opportunities available to them.

- The proportion of learners remaining on long qualifications has improved again this year and is high. Success rates on long qualifications were average last year but retention rates have improved well this year. Long qualification success rates range from average to high in almost all subject areas. The college has successfully tackled the low retention of adult learners at advanced level.
- The proportion of apprentices who remain on their programmes and achieve their qualifications is consistently well above average. It dipped slightly at intermediate level last year and was broadly average but it is consistently strong for the high numbers of advanced apprentices. The timely completion rate for all apprentices is consistently high. Apprentices develop very good skills which are appreciated by employers. Learners generally develop good skills in English and mathematics but these are not always reflected in high pass rates at GCSE.
- The achievement gaps between male and female learners and for a small number of groups of learners of minority ethnic heritage is reducing significantly. The success rates for learners with and without learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very similar. A very high proportion of school pupils aged 14 to 16, who attend college part-time, successfully achieve their qualifications.
- Many learners make very productive use of information learning technology. They have particularly well developed independent learning skills. Learners make particularly good use of the virtual learning environment, which they value highly, and they research topics skilfully on the intranet.
- A very high proportion of learners progress to higher level courses at college, higher education or into employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect good outcomes for learners. Teachers have high expectations of learners and this contributes very positively to learners making good progress.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan activities well to ensure that all learners work productively throughout and to their full potential. For example, in an outstanding advanced level economics revision lesson, learners worked highly effectively in pairs structuring responses to essay questions. After five minutes they moved around the room to critique and bolster the responses of other pairs of learners. All learners made significant contributions and very good progress in completing the task.
- Teachers use the outcomes of the initial assessment of learners' English and mathematics skills, subject related assessments and personal characteristics when producing useful learner profiles which are usually used very effectively when planning lessons.
- Teachers are confident and capable users of information learning technology (ILT). Teachers use ILT frequently to enliven lessons, clarify topics and broaden learning. Good use is made of white boards, video clips and internet links to create interesting activities that engage learners and extend their learning effectively. One engaging example involved a teacher using a computer generated model to show learners how an industrial print press prints different colours in stages.
- The virtual learning environment (VLE) is particularly useful for learners as it is very well populated across the college with materials that are highly valued by learners. The VLE is used frequently by learners to reinforce and build their learning both during and outside of lessons.
- Teachers clearly relate lessons at college to apprentices' tasks and activities in the workplace. Good communication between employers and the college enable apprentices to have tailored learning that meets their particular needs and they make good progress. For example, NVQ level 2 administration apprentices take some units at level 3.

- In weaker lessons questions are not always used most effectively to check and develop students’ learning and thinking skills and their ability to critically analyse topics. Teachers sometimes provide answers to questions too readily or allow a small number of learners to provide most of the responses. The use of non-directed questions occasionally allows learners to remain passive rather than fully engaged in lessons.
- Most lessons are well matched to the abilities of learners. However, in a minority of lessons teachers do not set work that is sufficiently challenging, particularly for more able learners, and learners do not make the progress they are capable of making. Learners sometimes lack sufficient practice and guidance to develop practical skills well enough. Many learners develop good skills for independent learning.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills in lessons, for example through working collaboratively in groups, taking part in discussions and making presentations. The development of learners’ English and mathematical skills in lessons is generally good but spelling and grammatical errors are not corrected in a small minority of cases.
- Learners are particularly articulate and well informed about their future options. Advanced level learners develop the research and study skills they need to progress into higher education very effectively. However, in some vocational course the development of employability skills is less effective.
- Teachers assess learners’ work carefully and accurately and provide useful feedback that helps learners to improve the quality of their work. Feedback is often provided electronically which enables learners to receive it quickly and from a variety of locations. A very small proportion of learners have to wait too long to receive feedback on their written work.
- Teachers monitor the progress made by learners well. The good monitoring, tracking and target-setting by teachers and assessors related to learners’ assessment outcomes contributes strongly to learners’ success.
- Learners receive good support from teachers, tutors and support services which helps them to complete their courses successfully. Learners greatly value the personal and academic support they receive at college, including the good support in developing their study skills.
- Highly effective information, advice and career guidance helps learners to make informed choices and ensures that they are prepared well for their courses. Careers guidance is very informative and readily available to all learners. Learners are well informed about the choices available to them to progress to further learning or employment.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped in lessons although the college holds a number of cross-college events throughout the year. Teachers do not plan to promote equality and diversity in lessons frequently enough. Naturally occurring opportunities to promote equality and diversity are sometimes missed. Learners are respectful of one another, treated fairly and enjoy learning in an inclusive and welcoming environment.

<p>Science including psychology</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and their impact is shown in good outcomes for learners. Success rates on most courses are improving and range from average to high. Most learners make good progress and progression rates to higher education or employment are high.
- Teachers have high expectations of learners. Most teachers use questions well to promote learning. In the best lessons questions are directed carefully and planned to meet the individual

needs of learners but this doesn't happen as effectively in weaker lessons. Learners are not involved sufficiently in a few lessons but teachers provide good support for them individually.

- In a good revision lesson in Physics, examination techniques were discussed thoroughly. Learners researched the examining board website individually to identify examination questions they found difficult. Learners received very good individual support from the teacher in how to improve their performance.
- Learners work well on their own, while being supportive of each other. They are effective independent learners in lessons who evaluate their own performance accurately. Learners enjoy their work and are articulate and confident. They pay good attention to health and safety requirements in lessons.
- Most lessons are well planned. Teachers frequently use the results of the initial assessment of learners' skills in English and mathematics, learners' preferred learning styles and the outcomes of subject-based assessments well when planning lessons. However, more demanding work is not always available to ensure that more able learners have sufficient challenge.
- Learners are well supported, both academically and personally, and they attend additional workshops and bridging courses which bolster their learning and prepare them effectively for examinations.
- Teachers track learners' progress and check their learning frequently. Learners find this process highly beneficial and motivating. Individual learning targets are often referred to by teachers in lessons and this ensures that learners are focused on meeting or exceeding them.
- Resources for learning are good and provide an appropriate professional learning environment which enhances learning. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is particularly good and learners use it frequently. It is well populated with useful materials, videos, quizzes, past examination papers and specimen answers. Staff track learners' use of the VLE and discuss the specific activities learners have undertaken, such as tests and reading, with them.
- Learners receive prompt, clear, accurate and useful feedback on their assignments and work in most cases. They are well motivated and know how to improve their work. In a few instances marking and feedback is not timely or helpful enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is embedded effectively in lessons and teachers reinforce learners' skills well. The development of English is reinforced extensively in revision workshops, particularly regarding scientific definitions.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners are clear about course requirements and receive good support and information about next steps to further and higher education or employment.
- Good use is made of a limited number of educational visits such as to a hospital haematology laboratory and of visiting lecturers with specialist expertise to enhance learning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching, learning and assessment is underdeveloped. There is an equality and diversity themed week in which aspects of diversity are incorporated into lessons but it is generally underdeveloped throughout the year. Learners are treated fairly and work well together in an inclusive environment.

<p>ICT for practitioners</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and lead to high success rates for learners on most courses. Learners enjoy their lessons, make good progress and develop computing skills at or

beyond the standard required for most courses. Learners are making better progress this year on AS level qualifications, in line with the national average.

- Learners made good progress in a lesson about data bases when they were involved in resolving problems. They received good support from the teacher who helped learners to think through any difficulties very effectively by asking them probing and stretching questions.
- Learners produce good work in lessons and, in some cases they produce work of outstanding quality. For example, one learner produced a project for his A level course which developed a system for the college to track learners' progress. This very useful system is now being used across the college.
- Learners develop good skills for independent learning. Teachers plan lessons effectively to develop learners' ability to work independently on a range of complex tasks and assignments.
- Teachers design assignments carefully to develop a wide range of learners' skills. However, in a small number of lessons teachers do not always plan effectively to meet the needs of each individual learner. Activities are not always sufficiently challenging for more able learners.
- Most lessons provide good opportunities for learners to share their work and take part in group or team activities. Most lessons proceed at a good pace which stimulates learning and learners understand their work well. Teachers encourage and support learners very effectively during practical sessions.
- Learners make good use of the well-populated virtual learning environment to gain information about all aspects of their courses and to reinforce and develop their learning away from lessons. Learners are confident when making class presentations and answering questions and they demonstrate good subject knowledge.
- Teachers provide good feedback on learners' work which is very effective in helping them to make good progress. Teachers monitor learners' progress effectively against their targets. Learners submit their work electronically and receive clear feedback promptly. Learners are fully aware of their personal targets and what they need to do to improve their work and complete their course.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is variable and requires improvement in a minority of lessons. Where it works well, teachers help learners to use strategies for checking their written work before submitting assignments. Mathematics and English are sometimes well integrated into vocational activities but opportunities to develop these skills are sometimes missed.
- Initial assessment identifies learners' starting points effectively in English and mathematics and the results are usually used appropriately to plan lessons which meet the needs of each learner.
- Teachers often use their good, up-to-date experience of industry to motivate learners and to help them see how theory is linked to practice. However, there are too few opportunities for learners to enhance their learning more broadly through external visits and contacts.
- Learners receive good careers advice and guidance that enables them to make informed choices. Careers advice enables learners to prepare very effectively for their next steps. Academic and personal support are good.
- The active promotion of equality and diversity in lessons occurs occasionally but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend learners' understanding of these issues. Learners work in a harmonious environment and are treated fairly.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Learning programmes for 14-16

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and reflect the outcomes for learners. The proportion of learners who successfully complete beauty therapy courses is above average and sometimes high, such as the NVQ L2 beauty therapy, but it is slightly below average in hairdressing. More learners have been retained on hairdressing courses this year. The majority of learners make satisfactory progress in developing practical skills. A high proportion of hairdressing learners progress onto related courses at college and the majority of beauty therapy learners progress into employment.
- Learners benefit from working on a wide range of clients in the better practical sessions. Learners are well motivated in these sessions and develop skills and confidence which meet industry standards. Teachers draw on their industrial skills effectively to inspire and raise learners' aspirations about their future careers. Teachers monitor learners' work closely in such lessons and encourage them to improve their standard of work.
- In less effective sessions, learners do not make the best use of their time. Learners sometimes come to sessions unprepared and occasionally there are long delays before learning or assessment activities start. In too many sessions learners work on practice blocks or their peers rather than on clients. Learners become bored and distracted and do not work to realistic demands which prepare them for employment.
- Learners in hairdressing do not always develop practical skills and professional practices well enough in lessons. While the majority of learners' work is of at least an acceptable standard, learners' practical skills are sometimes underdeveloped. Learners' client consultations, hair and skin tests are not always thorough enough.
- Teachers assess learners' work frequently and generally provide useful feedback throughout lessons. Learners do not always practice particular skills, such as completing certain cuts effectively, on clients before they are finally assessed. Learners sometimes have too few opportunities to practice their techniques on clients in order to ensure their skills are securely embedded.
- Learning is enhanced through a number of good enrichment activities for beauty therapy learners. Learners practice their skills by providing services during visits to many external groups. Hairdressing learners benefit from a period of work-experience. Learners develop a range of extra skills through taking additional courses which improve their skills for employment.
- Specialist accommodation is adequate but salons are dowdy and fail to inspire. Many wall displays do not project the professional standards of the industry and learners' work is not refreshed or displayed well enough to support learning most effectively.
- Support for learners is adequate. Learners' support needs are identified early and support is effective at keeping learners on track and on their courses. Tutors gather extensive information about students' specific barriers to learning. However, this is not used routinely to plan learning most effectively. Learners' targets focus on what they need to do rather than how they might improve their skills.
- Information, advice and guidance for learners are good. Students undertake taster sessions and attend open days which include trade tests for manual dexterity which give learners a useful insight into the vocational area. Learners receive good advice and guidance from staff to help them make decisions about their progression to higher level courses or employment.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is generally good. Learners are respectful of one another and are treated fairly. They have a good appreciation of how to treat clients from a range of backgrounds appropriately but the promotion of broader aspects of equality and diversity is underdeveloped in lessons.

Media and communication

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in students' good outcomes and success rates in AS and A level qualifications. The low success rates found previously in the smaller amount of vocational provision at advanced level has been addressed, and very few students now leave their courses early.
- Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and many have relevant and recent industrial experience that they share effectively with learners and this enhances their learning.
- Teachers set high expectations and design well-planned assignments and tasks that enliven learning. For example, in an intermediate level vocational media lesson, a particularly well-designed photography project brief prompted a learner to create a highly stylized presentation piece to a professional standard. It contained images and text that explored concisely the work of four photographers.
- Learners respond well to the very good support and encouragement they receive from staff and they produce work of a high standard. Learners' writing is often evaluative, concise and analytical in film and media A level essays. Vocational media learners present sophisticated, novel ideas and concepts through experimental and highly individual approaches in creative media, TV and film.
- Staff teams collaborate very well ensuring learners can extend and develop their ideas and concepts across a wide range of media fields. For example, A level learners explore their work in video, film, and photography using high specification software and equipment. Vocational media learners film music learners performing in their bands and practice editing interviews filmed by foundation degree learners.
- Teachers' verbal feedback on their assessment of learners' work in lessons and their written feedback on learners' marked work is very helpful in aiding learners' to progress. Teachers' feedback consistently and frequently on learners' grammar and spelling and this contributes greatly to learners' improved skills in writing and evaluating their own work. Teachers' insightful advice effectively develops learners' independence. It enhances their readiness for work or higher education and prepares learners effectively for examinations.
- In the weaker lessons teachers do not always focus sufficiently on learning. Schemes of work and lesson plans do not always identify good learning activities. Weaker teaching is typified by a meandering teaching style, slow pace, and a lack of thoughtful planning. In a few lessons teachers do not vary their teaching methods enough resulting in dull teaching. In such lessons students become distracted and lose interest.
- Although teachers routinely use questions throughout lessons, questions are often not directed well enough to elicit deeper understanding or to check learning thoroughly.
- Teachers have populated the virtual learning environment with extensive and thoughtful additional learning materials. Learners find the materials invaluable in helping them to extend their research and learning outside the classroom.

- Technical, academic and personal support and resources are good. Staff ensure safe working practices are adhered to and risk assessments are routinely carried out before practical project work begins.
- Information, advice and guidance are good and consequently learners have a sound grasp of career opportunities.
- Equality and diversity are covered well through teaching and learning and are promoted effectively. There are many examples of assignments that enable learners to explore a wide range of themes. Teachers use sensitively the extensive information about learners' specific needs which is gathered from initial assessment at the start of course.

Foundation English

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and reflect outcomes for learners which also require improvement. The proportion of learners successfully achieving functional skills in English ranges from average to high at different levels but the attainment of high grades at GCSE has been low for the last two years. Current GCSE learners are making adequate progress and the proportion remaining on their course improved from low last year to high in 2012/13. Progression rates to higher level learning are high.
- Teachers have high expectations of their learners and the pace in lessons is often brisk. Lessons contain tasks which motivate learners well. GCSE and functional skills lessons meet the requirements of the qualifications appropriately but they do not always reinforce and develop learners' skills sufficiently. Teachers' questions in lessons are effective at assessing what students know.
- Students' individual needs are not always met precisely enough in lessons. The initial assessment of students' needs does not always provide enough detail to help teachers plan lessons most effectively. Although teachers set different tasks for learners with different attainment levels, they do not always provide the most appropriate support materials, such as those suited to different reading abilities.
- Lessons are planned well to engage learners with a range of interesting tasks and include well-produced materials. Lessons are often helpfully contextualised to students' vocational courses and personal circumstances. However, in functional skills there are missed opportunities to enhance learners' speaking and listening skills as there are often too few activities involving groups or pairs.
- Teachers use resources well to enhance learning, with well-produced materials which usually match the abilities of learners well. Teachers use interactive whiteboards and other multimedia effectively to engage learners.
- Teachers mark assignments speedily and regularly. They provide full and useful feedback which helps GCSE learners to improve their work. However, marking in functional skills is not consistently helpful with some comments that are too brief to provide sufficient guidance for learners. In both subjects inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always corrected.
- Teachers are supportive and caring and learners are positive about how helpful this is for their learning. Learners work well together and are well supported in lessons by learning support assistants. Learning support assistants are not always present in lessons and where they are not, teachers sometimes struggle to meet the diverse range of needs of learners. Learners receive highly beneficial support during individual sessions.

- The tracking of learners’ progress is good. The college’s electronic system enables teachers to monitor progress effectively and learners track their own progress frequently. Teachers track learners’ progress in functional skills using a manual system which is effective.
- Information, advice and guidance is timely and appropriate and helps learners to decide on their next steps.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in GCSE English is underdeveloped. In functional skills, equality and diversity are promoted more frequently, for example, by using immigration or gay marriage as stimuli for lessons. Learners work in a supportive and caring environment and they are treated fairly.

Administration	
Learning programmes for 16-18	Good
Learning programmes for 19+	
Apprenticeships	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and align closely with good outcomes for learners. The success rate of apprenticeships for the last three years at both intermediate and advanced levels is good. A high proportion of learners progress to higher level apprenticeships. Learners attend well and make good progress. Learners develop English and mathematics skills effectively and have good skills for employment that are highly valued by employers.
- Teachers and assessors have high expectations of learners and encourage them to achieve more than the minimum number of NVQ units. Highly productive discussions between assessors, employers and learners ensure that learners are engaged on tasks that are meaningful to employers needs whilst meeting the needs of the NVQ. This enables many learners on level 2 programmes to achieve units at level 3.
- Lessons are generally well planned. However, not all lessons provide sufficient activities to meet the needs of all learners. For example, the most able learners are directed to complete more tasks when they finish early rather than progress to more difficult tasks. There is insufficient stretch and challenge for the most able.
- Teachers ensure that learners develop employability skills at college that complement those developed in the workplace.
- Teaching, learning and formative assessment are good with teachers and assessors asking open questions skilfully that allow learners to develop their knowledge and improve their learning very effectively. Most learners develop a good grasp of administrative practices such as stock control, filing, telephone answering and customer service. One learner introduced a useful computer-based tracking system for use in a medical practice.
- Teachers, assessors and employers provide high quality support that enables learners to make good progress. All teachers and assessors are teacher-trained and skilful in their roles. Learners are encouraged to bring workplace tasks into college, which teachers use well to develop learners’ administrative skills in a meaningful context.
- Assessment practices are generally very good. Assessors ensure that assessment in the workplace makes highly appropriate use of evidence collected through direct observation, witness testimony and professional discussions.
- Assessors and learners record evidence well, often using cameras and voice recorders to capture it effectively. Increasingly, well-constructed electronic portfolios are used to collate and record evidence and assessment decisions very effectively. The assessment of marked work is sometimes too cursory, and assessors’ comments do not always make it clear enough how the learner could improve their work. Assessors and learners set good targets during regular workplace reviews.

- Advice and guidance for learners are good for those wishing to join an apprenticeship programme. A three-day preparatory course for school leavers is popular and effective. Links with the college's information, advice and careers guidance service and other agencies are productive. In addition, a very useful short course over 17 weeks gives learners the experience needed to successfully join a main apprenticeship programme.
- Equality and diversity are discussed during all learner reviews but responses from learners are often too superficial; concentrating merely on legislative requirements. There is too little exploration of how to address equality and discrimination in the wider world or workplace. Learners are treated with respect. Minority ethnic learners are underrepresented on apprenticeship programmes. However, the college has been successful in increasing the number of male apprentices.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior managers work well together and have created a positive, supportive and open culture based on high expectations for learners.
- The strategic plan is aspirational and closely aligned with the needs of the Black Country and with government priorities. The college purpose and its key strategic priorities have a strong focus on learners and the curriculum. The plan is well articulated, clear and staff recognise their role in achieving its outcomes. However, it lacks sufficient measurable targets against which progress and success can be monitored.
- Governors use their wide range of skills and experience to support the college well. They receive training which helps them to carry out their roles well and to challenge college managers appropriately. Governors have restructured the way they work and co-opted new members to enable them to focus more closely on academic performance and teaching, learning and assessment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through a well-structured lesson observation process. Underperforming teachers are supported well to improve. However, the evaluation of lessons during observations is too generous and this curtails the college's ability to identify and support all staff who would benefit from support to improve their practice.
- Performance management is supportive and robust. Staff development has a real focus on delivering high quality teaching and learning through programmes such as the "Outstanding teacher" programme. Staff value the weekly learning and teaching programme meetings.
- The Principal has engendered a culture of continuous improvement which is successful in raising standards. The Principal leads a termly scrutiny of performance at course level which is a key driver of improvement. Self-assessment is inclusive but sometimes lacks sufficient rigour. Some strengths are sector norms and staff do not always base their judgments on substantive evidence. Moderation processes are not always effective enough at addressing inconsistencies in the evaluation of lessons and self-assessment.
- Mechanisms to systematically identify and share good practice across classroom based provision are well developed. However, good practice in work-based learning is not shared with staff who deliver full-time courses. Work-based learning and schools links are particularly well managed and the management of most curriculum areas is good.
- Action plans are used to bring about improvement, however many actions are for the whole college and are not always sufficiently prioritised or targeted on particular areas of need such as improving the success of a specific group. Insufficiently clear targets and infrequent monitoring sometimes hamper progress.

- Learners have a strong voice at college. Student governors are effective at representing learners' views. Learner ambassadors represent the college well at a range of events and faculty representatives contribute actively to self-assessment. Learning advocates provide training and coaching to further develop teachers' IT skills. Learners value these roles and are proud of the college.
- The broad curriculum meets the needs of students, the community and local industry well. The college provides progression routes from introductory levels to higher education with a partner university, in most vocational areas. Good partnership arrangements ensure a range of provision for 14-16 year old pupils, leading to college courses and progression to higher education institutions. Apprenticeship programmes are developing appropriately in line with resources and staff expertise. The college introduces new courses to meet carefully identified needs.
- The college welcomes all learners and has successfully implemented a wide range of initiatives, including free buses, to make it easier for students, including those with mental health issues or those not engaged in education employment or training, to access learning. Recently introduced courses in engineering, ICT and public services have successfully recruited more male learners.
- Equality and diversity are promoted through a number of cross-college events throughout the year. The events are designed to increase learners' tolerance and respect for individual differences. While aspects of equality and diversity form part of the curriculum for a number of courses, the promotion of equality and diversity is generally underdeveloped in lessons.
- There is too much variability in the way teachers promote equality and diversity themes and respond to the different abilities of individual learners in their planning of lessons. Managers monitor the recruitment and retention of different groups of learners. Actions taken to improve success rates are narrowing the achievement gaps between different groups in some curriculum areas. However, managers have not yet taken sufficient targeted action to narrow achievement gaps which exist.
- The college meets its statutory obligations in relation to safeguarding and has appropriate links with relevant referral agencies. There are appropriate recruitment and vetting processes for all staff and governors. Training for staff and governors is good. Students feel safe. The management of health and safety is meticulous. Bullying is not tolerated and reported incidents are dealt with promptly, sensitively and appropriately.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Halesowen College

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
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
Science	2
Psychology	2
ICT for practitioners	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Media and communication	2
Foundation English	3
Administration	2

Provider details

Halesowen 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: 3,857
	Part-time: 3,134
Principal/CEO	Keith Bate
Date of previous inspection	June 2009
Website address	www.halesowen.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Full-time	154	24	609	35	2,879	139	0	10
Part-time	159	849	319	350	252	484	40	238
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	32	18	25	10	20	6		
Number of learners aged 14-16	344							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A 							

Additional socio-economic information

Halesowen College is a large college situated in Halesowen in the West Midlands. It attracts learners from a wide area but mainly from the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell. The college works with over 30 feeder schools. Over half of the college's learners start their courses without having attained at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics. Approximately 22% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage. The area is economically diverse and includes some areas of considerable deprivation.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Gloria Dolan HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the Learning and Teaching Director 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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