

Stratford-upon-Avon College

General further education college

Inspection dates		01 – 04 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Too many students do not make sufficiently good progress
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good enough and varies too much between subject areas. Teaching is not sufficiently effective in helping learners to achieve their full potential.
- Quality assurance is not sufficiently robust to improve provision quickly
- Provision in visual arts is inadequate.
- Teachers do not sufficiently promote equality and diversity in lessons.

This provider has the following strengths:

- The majority of learners achieve their learning goals and make at least expected progress based on their starting points.
- Apprenticeship programmes have high success rates.
- Part-time provision for 14 to 16 year old school pupils has high success rates.
- Provision in hospitality and catering is good.
- The college provides a very welcoming, safe and friendly environment for students. Students of minority ethnic heritage and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with the average for the college.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and improve success rates by:
 - identifying and remedying the significant weaknesses in visual arts
 - ensuring that information from initial and on-going assessments inform lesson planning appropriately and that lesson activities meet the needs of individual students effectively
 - ensuring that students make good progress by providing good pace and sufficient stretch and challenge in lessons
 - ensuring that all students have an up to-date individual learning plan containing specific and measurable targets, and that students' progress against their targets is reviewed and challenged frequently
 - improving the development of students' English and mathematical skills
 - ensuring that written feedback to learners is of a consistently good standard.
- Further strengthen the teaching and learning observation process to ensure a consistently strong focus on students' learning and progress.
- Develop the virtual learning environment so that it becomes a valuable resource to support students' independent learning.
- Make sure that teachers promote equality and diversity well in lessons.
- Improve student attendance in lessons.
- Raise the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all managers are trained to fulfil their roles effectively
 - improving the use of lesson observations to:
 - report on the embedding of equality and diversity
 - better inform cross-college and curriculum-specific staff development
 - drive up the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more rapidly
 - further strengthening the timely monitoring of performance against action plans to ensure that underperforming courses improve quickly
 - ensuring that all reports are seen by governors in a timely fashion
 - taking sufficient account of feedback from students to plan improvements.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many students achieve their qualifications and make satisfactory progress. The success rate on long qualifications improved in 2012/13 to broadly average. The proportion of students achieving high grade pass rates at advanced level improved considerably in 2012/13 to slightly above average. Most students make at least adequate progress but they make too little progress in visual arts. ■ Success rates on advanced level courses, taken by the large majority of full-time students, improved markedly in 2012/13 to the national average and a much higher proportion of students achieved AS level qualifications than previously. Success rates at AS, A level and 	

vocational qualifications are around the national average. Success rates for the much smaller provision at foundation and intermediate levels are low. Almost all of the subject areas across the college had higher success rates in 2012/13 than in the previous year. Apprenticeship success rates are high and a high proportion of apprentices complete their programmes in good time. School pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend college part-time have high success rates.

- Both male and female students aged 16 to 18 have very similar success rates. The difference in the success rates of male and female adult students has decreased over the last three years but remains too large. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the same level of success as other students. Students of minority ethnic heritage have success rates that are very similar to the average for the college with no trend of underperformance.
- Many students are articulate and have well developed personal and social skills but their English and mathematical skills are not always developed effectively enough in lessons. Students develop these skills through, for example, well-focused discussions, by making presentations and completing mathematical calculations related to vocational subjects in lessons. In a lesson at foundation level students develop their English and mathematical skills very effectively when preparing and cooking rhubarb crumble. Travel and tourism students confidently discuss the merits and dangers to the travel industry of on-line review sites. However, teachers do not always make best use of opportunities to develop these skills well in lessons or to correct spelling and grammatical errors in students' written work.
- Students develop useful skills for employment in a variety of ways such as by participating in work experience, engaging in enterprise activities, team working and by developing well-considered interview techniques.
- The majority of students progress to higher level qualifications or into jobs that meet local and national needs. Students' attendance is acceptable but requires improvement to be good.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment reflects outcomes for students which also require improvement. The majority of lessons are at least good but too many require improvement and a small number of lessons are inadequate.
- In the better lessons teachers have high expectations of students and teaching and learning activities are well-planned to meet each student's needs. The pace of learning is good and students make good progress. In good lessons students often work well independently, in groups and pairs, share ideas and learn from each other. Teachers and assessors use effective questioning and other assessment techniques routinely to check learning, extend students' knowledge and enhance their thinking skills.
- Students make slower progress in less effective lessons. These lessons are less engaging and students often become passive. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of students and learning activities do not challenge students appropriately according to their ability. Teachers make insufficient use of students' starting points or prior knowledge when planning these lessons. They miss opportunities to engage students through discussion and review of key learning points. Questioning techniques are usually used effectively to check learning but they sometimes fail to promote deeper learning.
- Teachers and assessors are appropriately qualified and experienced. They draw on their professional expertise well to provide clear illustrations of key learning points for students. Teachers are enthusiastic and usually support students well.
- The new college system for lesson observations is more robust than previously but observers do not always pay sufficient attention to students' learning. Recent judgements made by observers however are accurate and pay sufficient attention to students' learning.

- The college's virtual learning environment supports learning well in some subjects but it is generally underdeveloped. Too few teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) skilfully in lessons. Students make too little use of ILT in lessons.
- The initial assessment of students' English and mathematics skills and starting points is good but assessment outcomes are not always used well enough to support lesson planning to meet individual needs. Tutors are slow to set up individual learning plans and do not always record or monitor target setting for students well enough to drive students' progress most effectively.
- Teachers often provide useful verbal and written feedback which helps students to understand how they can improve. Weaker feedback is too brief and does not identify clearly how students can further improve their work. The assessment of apprentices in the workplace is good and apprentices receive regular feedback on their performance. Target setting is effective in workplace learning and supports good progress. Teachers and assessors do not always identify incorrect spelling or grammatical errors in written work.
- Initial advice and guidance ensure that students are on the right course. Induction helps students to settle quickly into their courses. The college provides good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with personal problems. Staff provide good advice and guidance for students applying to universities.
- Students participate in a good variety of enrichment activities, including clubs and sports activities that are well supported by a growing alumni of ex-students and network of employers.
- Students have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity, which is promoted effectively as part of their induction at college. However, the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is underdeveloped.

Science Psychology

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment in science and psychology reflect the outcomes for students which also require improvement. Success rates at both AS and A2 psychology are variable and improving but slightly below average. The majority of students make broadly the progress expected based on their starting points. A high proportion of students progress to higher education. The GCSE double award in science is new this year. Previously high grade pass rates were low at GCSE.
- Teachers of AS and A2 psychology plan in detail a wide range of activities and research that help students of different abilities to understand concepts. Teachers are careful to allow time in lessons for students to reflect fully on their learning and to digest concepts and theory. Lesson activities are often well designed to develop students' knowledge and understanding. For example, one group of students explored the electronic structure of different elements with complete accuracy, using an interactive whiteboard.
- In the best lessons in both science and psychology, teachers have high expectations of students and guide students to analyse, compare and evaluate effectively. For instance, psychology students who discussed tyranny as a concept, contrasted dictators as tyrants of states with domestic abusers and argued well that abusers are tyrants within the home. Teachers ensure that workshop activities meet the preferred learning styles of all students well. Teachers set time limits or more challenging tasks for students of higher ability and assess their progress effectively.

- In less effective lessons, a minority of psychology students do not understand relevant mathematical terms and this slows their progress. The pace of learning is slower in less effective lessons in both subjects for students of all abilities. Students sometimes have insufficient opportunities to engage in sufficiently challenging work.
- A minority of students require extra support with mathematics in order to complete their courses most effectively but they are not adequately supported. Teachers sometimes fail to recognise when students have lower levels of mathematics knowledge and understanding which hinders students' progress and means that often they do not understand sufficiently what is being taught. Support for students to develop their independent learning skills is satisfactory. Students on the new double award science GCSE understand the progress they are expected to make and generally make at least acceptable progress in lessons.
- Good health and safety practices are well considered, understood and demonstrated by students. Science teachers work actively in partnership with laboratory technicians, so that practical science resources are well prepared.
- Teachers are well-qualified and have good subject knowledge. They provide useful feedback on written work which helps students to improve. Challenging targets for learning and attainment are set for individual students.
- Resources are good and used well. Accommodation is generally good but one room is cramped for the large number of students and group work is inhibited.
- Information, advice and guidance are adequate at getting students onto the right courses but the level of mathematical skills needed by students of psychology are not sufficiently explicit in promotional materials.
- Some good career references are built into lessons in psychology, but GCSE science lessons do not always take opportunities to relate subjects to job roles. For instance the work on diet does not inform students who intend to follow a career in childcare that cows' milk should not be drunk by babies under the age of one year, because it damages their kidneys.
- Equality and diversity are adequately promoted in lessons. There is a positive trend in the number of male students increasing in AS psychology where they were previously underrepresented. Male and female students' achievements are very similar.

Hospitality and catering

16-19 study programmes Apprenticeships

Good

- Outcomes for learners are good and reflect the good teaching, learning and assessment in both classroom- based and work-based provision. Students and apprentices develop excellent practical skills and prepare and serve food to a high standard. A high proportion of students progress into employment or further study. Attendance is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students. Teachers manage practical sessions with good authority. They carefully provide a supportive learning environment for students whilst instilling the discipline needed to work safely and effectively in the hospitality industry. Students are punctual and well-presented for the start of practical lessons and they demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practices.
- Teachers use a mix of collaborative and independent learning strategies to challenge and engage learners effectively. Intermediate students and apprentices support each other effectively through peer tutoring in theory lessons. They are competent and confident enough to help develop each other's' skills well in practical sessions.

- Teachers develop students' and apprentices' learning well in theory lessons and learners make good progress. The progress made by apprentices meets or exceeds the expectations of employers. Students and apprentices value highly the expertise and current skills of their teachers and assessors. Teachers and assessors use their extensive experience in industry to plan lessons and enrichment activities that are sharply focused to best prepare learners for industry.
- The college's excellent partnership working with high profile organisations and top chefs motivates and inspires students, widens their horizons and builds upon their skills for employment. For example, executive chefs from prestigious London hotels work with learners. They judge the outcomes of an advanced culinary skills course that recognises levels of achievement that go beyond the standards of learners' main qualification.
- Teachers use good assessment practices to ensure that learners make good progress. Teachers and assessors make frequent and accurate judgements on students' progress and competence. They use questioning techniques effectively to monitor and extend learning in all contexts. Teachers provide clear feedback to learners on their assignments with clear advice about how to improve. Teachers provide good verbal feedback at the end of practical lessons but procedures to record that feedback to inform individual target setting for the next lesson are weak and require improvement.
- Apprentices receive good support to develop their functional skills. Teachers incorporate the development of mathematical skills well in practical sessions. However, insufficient attention is given to the development of good English skills and students' spelling errors are not always corrected.
- The virtual learning environment is well populated and well used by students. It contains a useful range of planning documentation, links and resources to develop students' learning inside and outside the classroom.
- Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Teachers and learning mentors know their students well and provide good vocational and pastoral support for students and apprentices. Information, advice and guidance ensure that courses meet the needs, and expectations of students and trainees are well-matched to their employment settings.
- Students demonstrate respectful behaviour at all times. Teachers use a variety of themed menus to celebrate cultural diversity. However, the promotion of diversity requires further development in many lessons.

Visual arts

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment reflect the inadequate outcomes for students. Teachers enable students to develop adequate skills on a few programmes such as animation, photography and in a printing workshop. Students make slow progress in the use of visual analytical language and specialist terms to evaluate their own and others' work. A minority of students' work shows freedom in mark-making, experimentation and detailed exploration of processes.
- In the best sessions teachers provide care and support that benefits students, especially those who lack drive or confidence and have low aspirations. Teachers enable useful interaction between students, for example, good creative teamwork in animation. The college's positive partnerships and links with industry help students to make contact with employers and participate in professional projects. A small minority of students build their confidence by entering external competitions and taking part in public projects such as logo design, live briefs

and published works. Teachers draw on their career experience to provide a useful range of insights for students in lessons.

- Many sessions are less than good. Too many sessions are dominated by the teacher or take too long before they focus appropriately on developing students' skills in art. Teaching and learning methods are not challenging enough and they do not enable students with a range of learning needs to develop their skills and knowledge effectively.
- Too many sessions lack inspirational tasks to propel students' progress in learning and research. Students' independent learning skills are underdeveloped and students require frequent help from teachers to complete their work. Students make too few contributions in sessions. Teachers do not provide enough effective demonstrations, stimuli materials or hand-outs and students do not develop sufficient independent learning skills in annotation, for example.
- In too many sessions teachers do not set sufficiently high expectations and students are unsure of what they have to do. Too many learning activities limit students' development. Tasks are often set at low levels that do not meet the needs of all students. Teachers often provide insufficient extension activities for students who are ready for further challenge.
- Accommodation is poor. Too many spaces lack sufficient identity, equipment and resources. Learning environments are often cramped and overheated with too few, slow computers. The shape of rooms sometimes inhibits the ability of teachers to communicate effectively with the whole class. Teachers and students make infrequent use of virtual learning technology.
- A minority of assignment briefs are good but many are too limited in scope. Students receive insufficient feedback to help them improve their work effectively. Students' tasks in sessions are not time-bound. In most sessions tutors do not plan regular assessment activities, check the development of students' knowledge or use methods that enable students to reflect on their progress. However, in a print workshop students usefully evaluated each other's work. Individual targets for students do not promote sufficient improvements in learning. Students are not aware enough of pinpointed actions they should take to improve their work.
- Most students do not develop or improve their English, vocabulary and mathematical skills well enough in projects. Opportunities to practice spoken English in sessions are too limited. However, photography students develop mathematical skills appropriately in sessions.
- The induction programme allows students to sample a wide range of programme areas. Students receive targeted advice and support, notably on special projects and initiatives to link with industry.
- Teachers are inclusive, welcoming and value all students' views and ideas. However, sessions lack sufficient emphasis on promoting equality and diversity. Such themes are not adequately explored in teaching and learning.

English

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment reflect outcomes for students which also require improvement. The proportion of high grades on A level courses is above average. In most advanced level subjects students make the progress expected based on their starting points. The proportion of students achieving high grades at GCSE requires improvement. The number of students progressing between AS and A2 courses and then onto university requires improvement. The standard of students' work requires improvement.
- In the better lessons students work to a good standard and make good progress. For example, in an A level lesson students learned about textual frameworks, such as syntax and morphology,

and applied these concepts well when analysing a variety of texts. Students develop good skills for independent working. They enjoy their learning and feel good about the progress they are making. Students know how they can develop their skills further.

- Teachers have high expectations of students in better lessons. The enthusiasm and subject knowledge of teachers inspire their students to do well. Teachers use their understanding of students' strengths and development needs to plan lessons and design appropriate and challenging learning activities. For example, in one lesson the teacher helped students to identify the use of persuasive language in advertisements as well as the correct use of apostrophes. Teachers use targeted questioning effectively to build on students' prior learning and to check students' understanding of new concepts.
- In less successful lessons students' work is not of a good standard. Students have insufficient opportunities to engage actively in their learning and to apply new concepts. The pace is often too slow and activities are not sufficiently focused. The needs of individual learners are often not well met and students do not always make the progress of which they are capable. This is especially the case in GCSE classes where students have a wide range of needs and prior achievement levels. However, the atmosphere in lessons is conducive to learning and students treat each other with respect.
- The use of learning resources requires improvement. Staff are appropriately qualified and work well together as a team. On-line learning materials and homework tasks are available but their quality is too variable and some are underdeveloped.
- Initial assessment is good. However, teachers do not often make effective use of the outcomes of initial assessment to identify the individual learning needs of each student and to plan learning most effectively. Feedback from teachers on students' written work identifies areas for improvement well but teachers do not always provide sufficiently clear guidance on how students can improve their work. Target setting is mostly recorded on written work. Systems are not yet in place to record individual student targets for learning and to review their progress.
- Students appreciate the helpful support they receive, both in and outside lessons. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Students with special needs receive well-targeted support, for example, with sensory impairment, dyslexia and for English for speakers of other languages. Pastoral support is good. Support has enabled most students to stay on their courses and to achieve their qualifications.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. Teachers exploit naturally-occurring opportunities well to explore and, if necessary, challenge stereotypes.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Governors, the principal and senior managers have ambitions to improve the quality of provision, but these have not yet made sufficient impact on outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning. Since the last inspection in 2012, the college has made significant changes to its structure, staffing, quality assurance and governance arrangements. Some of these changes are beginning to have a positive impact on the outcomes for students. For example, in 2012/13, the success rate for advanced level qualifications improved, success rates improved in 11 of the 14 subject areas, and outcomes for apprenticeships were good.
- Governors are increasingly active in setting the direction for the college and monitoring progress towards achieving its objectives. Targets set in the strategic plan are used to set challenging targets for the principal, senior managers and others. Governors are effective at monitoring progress and challenging managers to produce better and more informed reports but reporting to governors is not always sufficiently timely. Governors use their skills well to serve the interests of the college. They lead on the appointment of new senior managers. The newly formed executive group is also beginning to act more robustly. Governors and senior managers

use a wide range of action plans to monitor progress, the most comprehensive of which is the recovery plan. Most, but not all, contain clear targets and success measures.

- Staff development and performance management are satisfactory. Performance is usually managed through well-established appraisals that use targets set at previous meetings. Increasingly, development needs identified in lesson observations are used appropriately to determine cross-college themes for the staff development programme. That has an increased emphasis on pedagogic practices. However, in some areas such as visual art, more subject specific training is needed to secure improvements in teaching, learning and assessments and outcomes for students. Although lesson observations are more rigorous and reports are better, they have not been used sufficiently well to monitor the embedding of equality and diversity or to facilitate the sharing of good practice.
- Quality assurance arrangements have been significantly strengthened but many are relatively new. However, key aspects are now more rigorous. For example, observers of teaching and learning have been trained and reports are now more useful and judgements more accurate. Learning coaches provide teachers of lessons graded 3 or 4 with well-focused support. The self-assessment process involves all staff and the self-assessment report for 2011/12 is accurate and well written but it does not take sufficient account of students' views. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report. The summary self-assessment report is concise, pithy and accurate. Managers make good use of the action plan developed after the last inspection to secure improvements in management and teaching and learning.
- The college is good at identifying and meeting the needs of local and regional employers. The college's recovery plan includes a thorough analysis of the needs of students and employers, and an adequate competitor analysis. Links with local and regional planning groups are good and the college has contributed to strategic economic development plans. The college has established good relationships with key industries of hospitality and catering, travel and tourism and social care. A broad apprenticeship programme provides well-trained employees for local and regional employers.
- Curriculum management is of inconsistent quality. Many managers are new to their post, and most have been promoted from within the college, which gives many of the teaching teams confidence that senior managers are aware of their concerns. However, not all promoted managers are yet fully effective in their new role. The monitoring of underperforming courses and interventions to bring about improvements have not been sufficiently successful in all areas. The college recognises this need and has developed a bespoke management training programme to begin in October 2013.
- Overall, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory but requires improvement to be good. Regular reports are produced for the executive and the governing body. Managers receive increasingly robust data on the performance of different groups and they take action to eliminate performance gaps. Publicity and other documents, including prospectuses, include examples of positive, non-stereotypical role models. Equality and diversity action plans are now more relevant and are monitored regularly. Students and apprentices are protected by an appropriate range of practices and policies designed to eliminate and tackle bullying and/or discrimination. However, equality and diversity issues are not fully embedded in lessons. Teachers appreciate the support they receive from learning coaches who provide advice on teaching and learning resources and activities. Teachers are very familiar with equality and diversity issues but lessons do not always meet the individual needs of all students in lessons.
- The college ensures that all students are safe. The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Safeguarding arrangements are clear and effective. A clear central register of staff is updated regularly. Named senior managers, a governor and all staff have been appropriately trained. Senior managers and governors receive regular annual and interim reports on the implementation of the safeguarding policy. The college works well with partners to address issues identified. Risk assessments are carried out and records kept which show that interventions have been effective in supporting and retaining students at college.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stratford-upon-Avon College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	16-19 study programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	3	2	3	3	2
Outcomes for learners	3	2	3	3	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	2	3	3	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	2	3	3	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	3
Psychology	3
Hospitality and catering	2
Visual Arts	4
English	3

[illegible]

At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:

- Academy of Music and Sound
- Armonia Limited
- JLD

Contextual information

Stratford-upon-Avon College is located in a relatively affluent and historic area of the country in Warwickshire. It offers courses in almost all subject areas. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Adults study mainly part-time courses including courses in the community. Two of the highest performing areas are performing arts and music, and hospitality and catering. One of the main industries of the area is tourism. The proportion of school pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes graded A*-C is higher than the national average. A high proportion of 16 to 18 year old students study advanced level courses.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Gloria Dolan HMI
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Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Vice Principal 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 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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