

Stockport College of Further and Higher Education

General further education college

Inspection dates		30 September – 4 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-4
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
Outcomes for students		Inadequate-4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Inadequate-4
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

Summary of key findings for students

This provider is inadequate because:

- Too many students and apprentices leave without achieving their qualification, and of those that remain many underachieve in relation to their starting points.
- Attendance is low and many students arrive late to their lessons.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough and varies considerably between and within subject areas.
- The college sets insufficiently high expectations for its students. Many students make slow progress and do not reach their full potential; too few achieve high grades.
- The planning of learning, in and out of the classroom, to meet the diverse needs of students is inadequate.
- The quality of teaching and learning and the outcomes for students in Foundation English provision are inadequate. The development of students' English skills is poor.
- Leaders have not acted quickly to reverse the significant decline in student achievement.
- Quality assurance arrangements and self-assessment are weak.
- The quality of much of the accommodation and many resources is poor.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Students from a broad range of backgrounds, and with different levels of achievement, enjoy their studies and behave well.
- Students value their teachers' approachability and support.
- The well-established employer links support the development of a range of programmes to meet local and national needs.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers know what good quality teaching, learning and assessment looks like and sharing good practice within the college to bring consistency across all subject areas
 - improving target-setting and monitoring students' progress more closely, including regular updating of target grades, to ensure that students are able to achieve the high grades that are in line with, and where possible exceed, their starting points
 - ensuring teachers clearly understand how to meet the needs of all students and by providing stimulating activities to ensure they reach their full potential
 - improving the provision of information and learning technology (ILT) by repairing broken and malfunctioning equipment and then ensuring it is used well by staff to support learning in and out of the classroom
 - planning lessons that motivate and engage students to develop analytical and independent research skills that extend their learning rather than focusing on task completion
 - making better use of initial and diagnostic assessments to provide specific and targeted support for students with identified needs
 - ensuring that teachers' feedback to students is clear, detailed and includes what they need to do to improve, and ensure that written feedback to students routinely includes the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors
 - rapidly improving punctuality and attendance at lessons.
- Improve success rates and students' progress by:
 - accurately monitoring students' work completion so that they achieve in the planned time
 - using data to quickly identify students who are at risk of leaving and put in place prompt intervention strategies
 - ensuring that all students have clear targets for achievement, including high grades, that are reviewed regularly, and raise students' aspirations so they achieve their full potential.
- Improve the provision in Foundation English by:
 - ensuring lessons meet the diverse needs and abilities of the individual students in each group
 - improving initial and diagnostic assessment to ensure that students' levels of English are assessed accurately before placing them into appropriate classes
 - improving communication between vocational staff and functional skills staff to enable them to support students' English usage in vocational areas
 - ensuring there are enough teachers and classes to meet the high levels of demand.
- Increase the rigour of quality assurance arrangements by:
 - clearly prioritising actions for improvement
 - producing targets that are realistic, measurable, regularly monitored and have a clear and positive impact on improving provision
 - developing accurate self-assessment supported by judgements that are based on reliable evidence
 - establishing a culture of high expectations.
- Improve accommodation and resources by:

reviewing the current estates strategy and prioritising areas for improvement to ensure that students are placed in appropriate accommodation and that resources to support learning are of a suitably high standard, and repairing or removing broken equipment.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for students	Inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Too many students leave the college without achieving their qualification. Long-course success rates for classroom-based learning are no longer declining but remain below those of similar colleges. Most subject areas have low success rates. Retention rates across all age groups have risen slightly but this has not had a proportionate effect on success rates. Although adult students achieve better than students aged 16 to 18 their outcomes remain below average.■ Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are inadequate. On entry-level courses, success rates have risen slightly but remain below average. Success rates on intermediate and advanced-level courses are low and have remained static for the last three years.■ The college's 2012/13 data show that short-course success rates dropped sharply and are very low, due partly to the very poor performance of subcontracted provision. However, success rates on short courses delivered by the college are also low.■ Apprenticeship success rates are significantly below the average for similar providers. Far too many apprentices do not complete their framework in the planned time.■ Minimum target grades, based on qualifications at entry, are not challenging enough and do not encourage students to reach their full potential. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of their students. Consequently, too many students make inadequate progress. For example, all students on the advanced-level tourism programme are given the same target regardless of their starting point. The proportion of students achieving high grades is very small.■ Attendance and punctuality fall below college targets and are poor. A significant minority of students arrive late to their lessons, disrupting classes and inhibiting learning for their peers.■ The proportion of students achieving functional skills at entry level and level 1 is high. However, the proportion of students achieving functional skills at level 2 and grades A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics is very low and significantly below success rates for similar colleges.■ The development of English and mathematical skills across subject areas is too variable. In construction, teachers make good use of opportunities to develop mathematical skills such as measuring angles. However, in other subjects, for example business, teachers do not use vocational work to develop students' understanding and use of mathematics.■ The standard of students' work requires improvement. The development of skills and behaviours to meet industrial and professional standards is inconsistent. For example, hairdressing students do not routinely complete skin tests to test for allergic reactions. In other areas such as construction skills, students use hand tools safely and proficiently.■ Outcomes for students from minority ethnic heritage groups, although better than those of White British students, are below the national average. The college's own data for 2012/13 show no discernible differences between the achievements of males and females. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve better than their peers.■ Students have the opportunity to develop personal, social and employability skills by taking part in enrichment activities, which are mainly focused on sports activities, and work-skills programmes. However, take-up varies considerably across subject areas. In September 2013, the college introduced a range of innovative initiatives to enhance students' employability skills. It is too soon to measure their impact.■ Although improving, the tracking and analysis of student progression and destination data require further improvement. The college is aware of significantly more destinations of students in 2012/13 but does not adequately track the destinations of all groups of students, particularly those leaving their programmes early.	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. The quality differs considerably between and within subject areas. Despite the college's efforts to improve teaching, learning and assessment only a minority of the lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or better and too many were inadequate. This is significantly different to the college's view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through its own observation process.
- Teachers have good working relationships and support their students well. They make good use of their subject expertise and industrial experience to link theory to work practice. Students mostly display good attitudes towards their learning and towards other students. However, insufficiently stimulating and challenging activities lead to low-level disruption in too many lessons and this impedes students' progress.
- In good lessons, teachers plan to meet the needs of all students. Stimulating and innovative activities extend the learning of the more-able students and the support for those requiring it is effective. In these lessons, the importance of independent learning is strongly promoted. For example, students on a second-year graphics course, working on a project to develop a poster promoting an imminent local science festival, were encouraged to take risks in approaching their work and where appropriate learn from their early mistakes.
- In lessons where progress is slow, teachers' expectations of students are very low. In too many lessons teachers talk too much and their questioning is ineffective in checking students' learning. Students listen passively and there are insufficient activities to engage them in purposeful learning.
- The availability and quality of learning resources, including ILT, is poor and, consequently, opportunities for teachers to enrich their teaching strategies are limited. Where ILT is available, it is often defective or teachers do not exploit its potential to stimulate and engage students. The virtual learning environment is not used consistently to promote students' independent learning. While it contains a good range of resources in some subject areas, in others it is poorly populated and is only used as a repository for documents and presentations.
- The quality of teaching accommodation varies considerably. For example, in construction, engineering and hospitality courses, students benefit from new classrooms and workshops and access to industry-standard equipment. Conversely, the accommodation in hairdressing and beauty therapy is out-dated and shabby. Too much teaching is delivered in accommodation that is cramped and unsuitable, providing uninspiring learning environments.
- The support provided to meet students' additional needs has contributed to their retention, which results in those students receiving additional learning support achieving better than their peers. However, the broader impact of this support is not measured systematically; for example, in identifying increased grades.
- Initial advice and guidance are adequate, enabling most learners to make informed choices about their programme of study. Most students with specific learning needs benefit from well-planned transition arrangements during their recruitment and enrolment.
- Academic target-setting is weak and, consequently, students do not reach their full potential. Some learners are set very low target grades even though their starting points are high. A 'stretch and challenge' project was introduced in September 2013 to address this but it is too early to judge its impact.
- The provision of work placements or other work-experience activities is inconsistent across subjects. Increased development of employability and enterprise skills is a key focus of new tutorial arrangements for the current year but it is too soon to judge their impact.
- The assessment of students' work is generally adequate but the quality of assessment feedback is inconsistent, and in some cases poor, in helping students to improve and develop. In too

many cases the identification and correction of students' spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors is insufficient.

- The college has responded quickly to the Government's requirement for improving English and mathematical skills. GCSEs in English are now a mandatory part of programmes for students who currently do not hold GCSEs with grades A* to C in English. However, the increase in staffing needed to achieve the changes, and consequent increased requirements on timetabling, have resulted in a chaotic start to their studies for many students, particularly those studying functional skills English.
- Although most students have their English and mathematical skills assessed when they enrol on a course, diagnostic assessment is inadequate. Students' strengths and areas for improvement are not accurately identified at the beginning of courses and the planning of individual learning is poor.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. While most students have a basic awareness of equality and diversity, there is insufficient promotion during lessons and students' knowledge and understanding are insufficiently developed.

Building and construction

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The overall success rates for framework completion are considerably below the national average as are the success rates for completion within the agreed time.
- The recently introduced apprentice-management team has increased the number of workplace assessors; visits are more frequent but it is too soon to measure their impact. Attendance at college is good and apprentices enjoy their study. They make good progress in the workplace as their skills develop, enabling them to take on more responsibility and complex tasks.
- Apprentices benefit from teachers' and workplace assessors' good industrial experience. In good lessons, teachers use information and communication technology effectively to enhance apprentices' understanding. For example, a teacher used three-dimensional graphics to display the structure of a cavity wall then peeled away the brickwork to reveal the substructure, insulation and wall supports.
- In several lessons, teachers instruct students too much, stifling apprentices' opportunities for reflection. Not all apprentices are fully involved in lessons and teachers do not use questions skilfully enough to check apprentices' knowledge and understanding.
- In practical sessions, apprentices develop good industry-standard skills in fully equipped workshops and use hand tools and equipment with confidence. In a carpentry lesson, apprentices built scaled-down models of complex roof structures, demonstrating their competence in calculating angles and accurately cutting joints, roof struts and trestles.
- Assessment is fair and accurate. On workplace visits, assessors adequately review apprentices' progress with their supervisors and plan future workplace assessments. However, employers do not receive formal feedback on apprentices' development and progress. During reviews, apprentices' individual targets are agreed but these are often vague, not measurable and not used effectively to help them achieve their full potential.
- Assessors develop suitable links with the local construction industry and employers that ensure training provided by the college meets local industrial needs. Apprentices are respectful and work collaboratively, exchanging ideas and helping each other. They receive appropriate training

in equality and diversity that is further promoted during review visits to ensure they are prepared for the diversity of the customers they are likely to encounter.

- Initial advice and guidance ensure apprentices are on the correct course. At enrolment, appropriate assessments identify apprentices' English skills and support needs. Pastoral support for apprentices provided by workplace assessors is good. Apprentices with an identified need receive effective individual support.
- The development of apprentices' English skills by vocational teachers is insufficient. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not routinely corrected in written assessments. However, apprentices' mathematical skills are developed well in both theory and practical sessions. For example, apprentices confidently demonstrate their competence when accurately measuring timber, calculating brick quantities and working out heating-system values.
- Health and safety are embedded in the curriculum and the workplace, with all apprentices working safely, undertaking risk assessments and wearing the correct personal protective equipment. During assessors' workplace visits, health and safety are integrated and the college and the workplace provide safe environments.

Construction crafts

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as do the very low but improving student achievements. Retention rates improved in 2012/13 and are now above national averages on most courses. The worst performing courses in 2012/13, primarily in plumbing, are no longer delivered. It is too soon to judge the impact of the new modular-based assessments introduced for the current academic year.
- Teaching and learning in practical lessons are good. Students have high standards and produce good practical work, benefiting from teachers' high expectations and the support and praise they receive. For example, in a bricklaying lesson, students constructed a one-brick garden wall to a good standard.
- Teaching and learning in the majority of theory lessons require improvement. In the best lessons, teachers effectively link new topics to students' prior knowledge. Teachers regularly check students' understanding and knowledge of key concepts, challenge them to extend learning and provide effective individual support.
- In too many lessons, planning is ineffective and does not sufficiently plan for the individual needs of students. Too much input from teachers results in students not having sufficient time to reflect and consolidate their learning. Many students do not contribute in lessons that mainly focus on covering basic content rather than on extending learning to more complex concepts.
- Most lessons lack sufficient pace and teachers do not adequately check on the learning that is taking place. Students make slow progress in these lessons and the monitoring of the progress they do make is ineffective. In many lessons, attendance is poor and too many students arrive late, disrupting learning for their peers.
- Workshops and classrooms are equipped to a high standard and students appreciate the opportunities to work with industry-standard equipment. However, the use of ILT by both students and teachers is insufficient to broaden approaches to learning and to develop independent study and research skills.

- Partnerships with employers are good. For example, dry-lining courses have been developed with a local business to meet local and national skills shortages. Local companies facilitate industrial visits and donate consumable materials that benefit students in their practical activities.
- Initial assessment requires improvement. Students complete an extended trade-specific initial assessment that provides teachers with detailed information to place students on the appropriate level of qualification. However, insufficient use is made of the results of initial assessment to inform lesson planning. Targets to support students' broader development needs are too vague.
- The development of students' mathematical skills in practical lessons is good. Teachers skilfully integrate basic mathematics into practical tasks. For example, first-year carpentry and joinery students develop numerical skills through accurate measuring, scaling and drawing the components they intend to construct. In contrast, opportunities to develop students' English skills in many lessons are lost. Students' written work is not routinely checked or corrected.
- Advice and guidance for students are effective. Students receive appropriate advice about the particular type of construction course that might suit them best. Social media are used appropriately to raise students' awareness of job vacancies in the construction industry.
- The promotion and integration of equality and diversity in lessons are weak. For example, teachers continuously refer to construction workers as males, failing to highlight and promote the growing number of females within the construction industry.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. This is reflected in the outcomes for students, the low attendance and poor punctuality in many lessons. Although there was a significant improvement in success rates in beauty therapy in 2012/13, which are now well above the average for similar colleges, success rates in hairdressing remain close to the average.
- Relationships between teachers, trainers and students are positive and students value the supportive, nurturing approach of staff. While some teaching and learning is good, in too many lessons teachers do not plan carefully enough to ensure all students are able to make sufficient progress.
- In too many hairdressing lessons, teachers have low expectations of what their students can do and activities are mundane. Teachers focus on what students are required to do to achieve the basic assessment requirements rather than extending learning and progress to high professional standards.
- Teachers are aware of students' needs and their barriers to learning. However, teaching and learning activities for students with identified needs are not supportive enough to enable them to make good progress. In theory lessons all students complete the same activities resulting in the more-able students becoming bored, and this limits their progress.
- Target-setting in theory and practical sessions helps students to understand how they need to improve their skills during lessons. Students receive effective guidance in lessons to self-evaluate their progress. Teachers use this information to plan a variety of practical tasks, including scenarios that are more challenging for able students. In several lessons teachers do

not encourage good professional practice such as ensuring students demonstrate high-quality client consultation skills.

- Several staff use their vocational knowledge and skills effectively: learning activities are designed well to maintain students' interest and extend their understanding of topics. However, teachers' questioning to promote learning and understanding is weak, particularly in theory lessons. Too many students are passive and teachers do not respond quickly enough to encourage them to participate.
- Students benefit from a range of opportunities to complement their courses and improve their employability. For example, beauty therapy students are able to learn current popular treatments such as threading and spray tanning.
- Classrooms and salons are shabby and poorly lit, which deprives students of opportunities to learn in state-of-the-art professional environments. There is a shortage of resources and technology to support high quality learning.
- Information, advice and guidance are variable. Staff promote career progression routes suitably. Many students, particularly those at higher levels, are ambitious and focused on their longer-term career goals. However, a minority of students have been inappropriately enrolled to foundation-level hair and beauty programmes as too much emphasis is placed on the results of initial screening and students' low levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- Teachers emphasise the importance of functional skills and in the better lessons students carry out related mathematical activities. However, support for the development of students' English and mathematical skills is inconsistent. For example, teachers do not promote the good development of speaking skills when working with clients. Spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors in students' written work are not routinely corrected.
- Teachers' lesson plans include references to equality of opportunity. However, teachers are not confident enough to explore concepts in sufficient depth to broaden students' understanding of equality and diversity. For example, during a session exploring employability skills, the teacher could not confidently explore with students issues regarding equality and diversity in the workplace.

Teaching and lecturing

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the good outcomes for trainees. Success rates have improved to near or above the national average on the teaching awards and learning support programmes. There are very small numbers of students in this area and very few trainees are employed by the college as teachers.
- The planning and management of teaching are good. Trainees critically evaluate their teaching through reflective practice. Teachers encourage trainees to widen their own range of teaching approaches to become more effective in the classroom.
- Teachers are well qualified and highly motivated. They provide trainees with highly effective training and development to meet relevant awarding authority standards. Trainees are challenged effectively through the high expectations of their teachers throughout their programmes.
- Strong relationships and mutual respect between teachers and trainees allows trainees to make good progress in a highly supportive learning environment. All trainees receive good

encouragement to develop independent learning skills and to become skilled users of learning technologies.

- The good and outstanding sessions delivered by teachers contribute to trainees improving their own practice. These sessions are effective in connecting teaching theory to practical classroom delivery. Classes are lively, informative and enjoyable. Good practice is encouraged and shared amongst trainees throughout the programme.
- Support for trainees is very good. Initial assessment is effective in identifying trainees' additional support needs. Training programmes are delivered flexibly to meet individual trainee needs. Mentors provide trainees with valuable feedback from observations of teaching sessions. Trainees make good progress in their subject teaching through this strong specialist support.
- Teachers have a good awareness of the individual needs of the trainees and are able to plan and develop activities effectively. Written and oral feedback are timely and developmental and they provide trainees with improvement actions.
- Trainees have a good understanding of their progress and areas for development through regular reviews and feedback from the observations of teaching sessions. However, individual learning plans are not used to monitor progress and set targets.
- The development of English and mathematical skills has a high priority throughout the programmes. Spelling, punctuation, grammatical and mathematical errors are corrected routinely on assignments and English and mathematical themes are identified in the standard lesson plans used by trainees.
- Trainees receive good information, advice and guidance. Teachers have good knowledge of further- and higher-education courses and professional progression opportunities, and trainees are provided with good quality advice and guidance. Trainees receive good advice and guidance during their reviews and are encouraged to reflect on future development needs.
- Trainees receive relevant equality and diversity training during induction. Equality and diversity are covered adequately through specific training units and through the assessment and review process. Equality and diversity themes are identified in lesson plans. However, trainees miss opportunities to promote equality and diversity within their own teaching sessions.

Independent living and leisure skills

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as does the development of students' skills in lessons. A significant minority of students do not make sufficient progress.
- Although most students gain one or more qualifications in recognition of their learning, teachers focus too much on qualification achievement.
- In the best sessions, teachers are skilful in engaging and challenging students. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of personal safety and health and safety through interactive activities including risk and hazard spotting. For example, in a practical cooking session students demonstrated effective knife skills when preparing vegetables to make soup.
- In the less successful lessons, teachers do not always plan sufficiently to meet the needs of students with differing abilities, in particular students who are more able. In these lessons, learning is significantly impeded and students become bored and disinterested, completing activities very quickly and waiting for other students to catch up. Some activities take too long to complete and provide limited opportunities for learning.

- The planning of learning programmes for individual students requires improvement. Programmes and lessons are not planned well enough to help students to develop their skills including personal and social development, literacy and numeracy and vocational learning. Teachers do not ensure that all students work towards challenging targets to accelerate their progress.
- Assessment has improved recently and is now more comprehensive. Teachers give students helpful feedback that helps them improve the standards of their work, which is mostly good. However, the recording of assessment outcomes is not sufficiently detailed to enable teachers to plan comprehensive learning programmes for individual students.
- The range and use of learning resources in lessons requires improvement. Although pictorial resources are used particularly effectively to support theory sessions, and the interactive whiteboard, where available, is used imaginatively, not all classrooms benefit from information and communication technology. The café and kitchen enable students to develop effective health, safety and cooking skills to support independence. However, practical opportunities to develop skills including personal presentation, shopping and budgeting are limited.
- Vocational learning options are limited. The college has been successful in increasing the number and range of work-experience opportunities that include animal care, health and social care, retail and hairdressing. However, vocational learning is limited to a choice of one vocational option from motor vehicle, construction, catering, or retail through the college café. Students do not have opportunities for vocational taster sessions in a variety of occupations to help them make informed choices. Many students are not enrolled on their first choice vocational option.
- Personal support for students is effective. Teachers and support staff provide helpful advice and guidance on personal matters. They are skilful at dealing with students' concerns, enabling them to settle down to learning quickly. Students have benefited from college links with specialist recruitment agencies with approximately one in five students gaining supported employment in 2012/13.
- Opportunities for teachers to promote equality and diversity through discussion and exploration of topics and concepts are limited. For example, students are told not to be disrespectful towards each other but do not explore what the impact of the lack respect may have on others.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. This reflects the success rates for functional skills in English at level 2 and success rates in GCSE English at grades A* to C which are very poor. However, success rates for functional skills English at entry level 3 and level 1 are good.
- In the better lessons, planning is good and lesson plans are detailed. Activities are varied and students are fully engaged in learning through completing a range of challenging and relevant practical tasks, such as classifying text and writing persuasively. Teachers' oral feedback is encouraging and motivational.
- In the weaker lessons, learning is not matched well to each student's learning needs and abilities. The pace of learning is too slow for some students and too quick for others and their progress is slow. Students who require the teacher's guidance sometimes have to wait too long for it. Insufficient use is made of ILT and some data-projected images are indistinct while others contain errors.

- Individual learning plans do not contain clearly defined targets that are time-bound, challenging, realistic and achievable. Learning objectives are often identical for all students in a class and usually focus on task completion.
- All students undertake initial assessment and the results are used appropriately to indicate their level of English. Diagnostic assessment, which often consists of a free writing task, is inappropriate and does not adequately identify students' current level of skills. Students' strengths and areas for improvement are not accurately identified at the beginning of courses, consequently their progress is impeded. Students' work is assessed regularly and marked effectively.
- Arrangements for organising functional skills English classes for students in occupational areas are inadequate. During the inspection, lessons were disrupted by students new to the class arriving after the start of the lesson. Staff in vocational areas have inadequate involvement with functional skills staff, which prevents them from supporting students' English in vocational areas.
- Foundation English teachers are enthusiastic, committed and well qualified. They are eager to support their students to achieve. Teachers' effectiveness is significantly reduced when class sizes are large and there is confusion about which students should be attending their classes. The rapid increase in GCSE English classes has put a considerable strain on staff and resources.
- Students make good use of the information, advice and guidance services provided by the college when the need arises. 'Study Plus' provides good additional learning support in Foundation English to students who require it. Not all students receive accurate information about re-sitting when they fail an English examination and some have to wait too long before doing so.
- For many students, the two-week induction programme is unnecessarily long and unproductive. During this time opportunities for diagnostic assessment of students and allocating them to Foundation English classes are lost.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity are insufficiently extended during lessons. Students with physical impairments, for example, restricted vision, are successfully accommodated in Foundation English classes. Students with dyslexia are provided with coloured handouts or overlays to facilitate their learning and dyslexia screening is available when needed.

Business

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate and this is reflected in the low success rates. In 2012/13, overall success rates declined sharply and on advanced-level courses performance was poor. The majority of lessons observed during the inspection were judged as either inadequate or requiring improvement. Because of poor teaching, too many students do not make sufficient progress.
- Although targets are set for students, teachers' expectations are too low. In a significant number of lessons, too many students make poor progress. Although students are supported and encouraged to stay on their course the retention rate was low in 2012/13. Attendance and punctuality are poor.
- In A-level provision, teachers use skills and expertise to plan and deliver learning which is engaging. Students have good opportunities to learn in a variety of ways, for example through

collaborative work and the use of case studies highlighting the changes within food retail and grocery markets.

- In business, teachers pay little attention to the needs of individual students, concentrating on delivering content rather than on providing engaging learning activities. Too often lessons are led by teachers and students have few opportunities to work collaboratively on stimulating and relevant tasks. This frequently results in learning which does not challenge or extend students' learning. ILT is not used effectively to enhance learning.
- Teachers make too much use of open and basic questions, which do not challenge students. Probing questions to extend learning are very rarely used. This results in too many students becoming disinterested, bored and disruptive, which impedes their learning and progress.
- Assessment practices are inconsistent and require improvement. Although some students improve their work as a result of some good assessment which is competently undertaken by teachers, assessment practices are weak in most courses. A major weakness is the absence of feedback on students' work. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not routinely corrected.
- Accommodation is unsuitable for too many lessons. The use of computing rooms restricts the type of activities that students can complete. For example, lessons observed in these rooms consisted of teachers' input, individual student research and whole-class feedback, with very little variety of activity to keep students interested in the lesson.
- During induction, students are appropriately assessed to determine their suitability for business programmes. Their ongoing progress is monitored through tutorials but this is ineffective. For example, on advanced-level programmes students are encouraged to re-negotiate their targets at the beginning of year two but too few students take up this opportunity and some have not met their target grades from the previous year. In most lessons, teachers do not set high enough expectations for their students.
- The development of students' English, mathematics and functional skills is weak. The discrete delivery of GCSE and functional skills is new this academic year and it is too soon to judge the impact. The development of students' English and mathematics through their business course is weak.
- Appropriate information, advice and guidance at enrolment ensure students are on the correct programme. Advice and guidance provided by the curriculum team are adequate. The current tutorial system does little to raise students' aspirations.
- Equality and diversity are not promoted well enough through teaching and learning. For example, discussions about image and public perceptions of tattoos and piercings did not explore the issues fully to expand students' understanding of their relevance for the workplace.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders and managers have not established a culture of high expectations. Targets are not ambitious enough. A range of targets is set at college level. The target for long-course success rates has not been met in recent years. The target for 2013/14 is not sufficiently ambitious since it is in line with the national average for 2011/12. Success rate targets do not distinguish between 16 to 18-year-old students and adult learners.
- Too much emphasis is placed on overall success rates so that the low success rates for long courses for 16 to 18-year-old students are not given enough prominence. The target set for retention is for in-year retention and does not take into account drop-out during the summer

over two-year courses. The management of data is weak, which contributes to weaknesses in monitoring performance.

- The management of apprenticeships has been poor in recent years. Anticipated success rates for the current year remain low. The management weakness has been recognised and recent changes have been made so that apprenticeships are now being managed by the relevant curriculum areas. While managers are positive about the change, it is too early to gauge whether this will have a beneficial impact on success rates.
- Management of a subcontractor with high numbers of students has been weak and as a result short-course success rates dropped substantially in 2012/13. This contract has now been terminated.
- Self-assessment lacks rigour. Self-assessment grades are over-generous and the college's self-assessment report does not analyse or explain the relationship between leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes. Subject area self-assessment reports for the 2012/13 academic year are not analytical enough in identifying specific weaknesses so that it is not clear precisely what actions are needed.
- In recent years, much governor and management time has been spent on issues relating to finance. Papers and minutes also show that much recent management time has been spent on issues associated with the new local free school for 14 to 18-year-olds that the college is sponsoring.
- Management of the college buildings is poor. While some management offices are well furnished and there are some very well-equipped specialist areas, the state of some of the teaching accommodation is poor and many students are being taught in unsuitable, cramped and shabby rooms with inadequate learning resources. This is one factor limiting the range of teaching and learning strategies that teachers can use, especially in terms of information and communication technology.
- The management of teaching, learning and assessment is not strong enough to bring about the rapid improvements necessary to ensure that enough lessons are good or better. A thorough analysis of the outcomes of lesson observations is used to inform staff-development planning. A comprehensive programme of activities to improve aspects of teaching is planned each year. Where weaknesses are identified through observation, teachers are directed to attend relevant development sessions. There are examples of work with individual teachers leading to improvements in observation grades. The impact of all this work is beginning to be seen in some areas but progress is too slow. The quality of teaching over time is inadequate.
- More attention is now being given to performance management. A culture of increased autonomy and accountability is being promoted. Appraisals of staff, which had not been completed for all staff in previous years, were carried out for almost all staff in 2012/13. Aspects of student performance feature in teachers' objectives. A specific management focus on a small number of courses with particularly low success rates has resulted in considerable improvements in some cases. Where actions were ineffective in one area the courses have been withdrawn, leaving some gaps in provision. Strategies to improve retention led to improvements in the 2012/13 academic year.
- Governance requires improvement. Governors bring a wealth of business and industrial experience including much local knowledge. In recent years, steps have been taken to appoint new governors with relevant expertise, for example in education. Governors take a close interest in the college's work, and link governors attend various curriculum area meetings. They are clear about their strategic role and the need to act as critical friends. However, governors have not vigorously challenged college leaders about weaknesses in student outcomes. Minutes of meetings show insufficient attention to this aspect of the college's performance, especially for 16 to 18-year-old students.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily and the college support services are well managed to provide a wide range of support to students with specific learning needs.
- Curriculum planning ensures that a wide range of courses is available with progression routes through different levels, including progression to higher-education courses in several subjects. A wide range of vocational courses is available for 16 to 18-year-olds, with some including work experience. More comprehensive 16 to 19 study programmes are beginning to be developed. The college has well-established links with local employers and very new initiatives to develop students' employability skills include partnership work with a national employment agency.
- The need to improve punctuality and attendance is a priority but the new attendance policy has not produced improvement. Students' attendance and punctuality during the inspection were poor. Steps have been taken to provide opportunities for students without GCSE grades A* to C to resit GCSE English, but this has yet to be extended to mathematics. The management of English, mathematics and functional skills is weak.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stockport College of Further and Higher Education

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Building and construction	3
Construction crafts	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Teaching and lecturing	2
Independent living and leisure skills	3
Foundation English	4
Business	4

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college								
Age range of students	14+								
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 2,767								
	Part-time: 5,921								
Principal/CEO	Mr Stephen Carlisle								
Date of previous inspection	May 2008								
Website address	www.stockport .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 students (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
Full-time	406	65	542	202	944	470	11	118	
Part-time	339	1,067	504	1,164	306	539	47	943	
Number of traineeships	16-19			19+			Total		
	N/A			N/A			N/A		
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	224	281	111	142	2	12			
Number of students aged 14-16									
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	290								
Number of community students	N/A								
Number of employability students	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:	<div><div></div><div>RME Consultancy Limited</div><div></div><div>GT Innovations Limited</div><div></div><div>Grove Training</div></div>								

Contextual information

The college is located in the centre of Stockport which is eight miles from Manchester on the south western edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation. Stockport has a population of approximately 283,900. Some wards within the borough have high levels of deprivation. The proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C has improved significantly in recent years and in 2012 was slightly below the North West average but slightly above the national average. The unemployment average is below the national rate. The main source of employment in Stockport is in professional occupations. The proportion of those with an advanced-level qualification is higher than the national rate. Around 8% of the local population have no recognised qualifications. According to the 2011 census, approximately 8% of residents are from a minority ethnic heritage.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors and six additional inspectors, assisted by the Deputy Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used data on students' 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 students and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the college. 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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