

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		15–18 October 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:

- Staff, governors and managers have high expectations of students and effectively promote ambition.
- Teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and the effectiveness of leadership and management are all good. The large majority of students achieve their qualifications and make good progress. Overall, students make excellent progress on AS-level qualifications.
- Caring staff support students well in their academic achievement and personal lives.
- The college has a harmonious and purposeful environment and students and teachers treat each other respectfully. Students from all groups achieve successful outcomes, which are similar to the average for the college.
- Staff prepare students well for progression onto higher education and a just under half attend highly competitive universities after leaving college.
- Students' average attendance and punctuality are good.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Teaching, learning and assessment do not ensure that all students make sufficiently good progress in all subjects. A minority of lessons lack sufficient pace and challenging activities to stimulate students' learning most effectively.
- The tracking of students' progress is not sufficiently rigorous across all subjects
- Lessons are not always sufficiently challenging for the more able students.
- Observations of teaching, learning and assessment and actions to resolve weaknesses identified during the observations do not always improve lessons effectively enough.
- Quality assurance is not sufficiently robust in all subject areas to ensure adequate improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the good teaching, learning and assessment to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons and reduce the proportion that require improvement. Ensure all lessons have sufficient challenge to meet the needs of all students, including the most able, so they can accelerate their progress. Ensure teachers always check learning frequently and effectively in lessons so that students develop well the consistent ability to analyse topics critically. Make sure teachers use information learning technology (ILT) imaginatively in more lessons to stimulate and improve students' learning.
- Ensure planning for lessons is robust so that strategies for learning meet the needs of each student fully and at a good pace which engages and motivates students. Teachers to avoid over long explanations and ensure that students are fully involved in lessons by using a range of strategies to stimulate their thinking, involvement and contribution. Promote the development of students' mathematical skills in non-mathematics related lessons.
- Review and improve the system for tracking students' progress to ensure it is always clear, robust and drives students' progress.
- Ensure managers analyse rigorously the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and plans to improve these area are clear and robust at subject area level, and that managers monitor the implementation of actions for improvement more effectively at subject area and college level.
- Actively promote diversity sensitively in lessons particularly by using naturally occurring opportunities to develop students' wider understanding of issues.
- Review and improve staff appraisal by ensuring objectives are measurable and clearly link to the subject areas' improvement plans and, where appropriate, to college targets. Make sure teachers understand their responsibility for improvement and they clearly understand their role in providing students with outstanding provision at all times.
- Ensure subject self-assessment reports have the same standards so reports are more evaluative and focus clearly on areas for improving all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Make sure lesson observations are effective in raising the standard of teaching, learning and assessment by focusing on the actions a teacher needs to take through providing targeted training and support to meet individual needs and by the frequent monitoring of the impact of actions for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Students' attainment when they start advanced level courses at college is above average. The very large majority of students complete their qualifications successfully. Success rates are at or, more usually, above the average for sixth form colleges. They are above average for AS-level and A-level qualifications. Success rates in almost all subject areas are high. Success rates are low in a small number of subjects including in a minority which students take in addition to their main qualifications.
- Students make good progress overall and they make excellent progress at AS level. They made average progress at A-level in 2012/13. Managers and staff recognise that the most able students could sometimes make better progress. Students achieve a high proportion of high grades at advanced level. Students' high-grade pass rates at GCSE are good. Attendance is good and students are punctual for lessons.

- Female students have higher success rates than those for males. The gap between the success rates of male and female students narrowed slightly in 2012/13, but remains too large. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities succeed well as do those from minority ethnic groups.
- A high proportion of students move from intermediate to advanced level. Most completing AS-level qualifications go onto A-level courses. Students have positive destinations after leaving college and a high proportion progress to higher education or employment. Nearly half of students go on to attend highly selective universities.
- Students have well-developed personal and social skills. Most are articulate, personable and express themselves confidently. Students' vocabulary and understanding of technical terms is good. However, teachers do not develop sufficiently students' mathematical skills in many subjects. Most teachers correct spelling and grammatical errors in students' written work. Students enjoy taking part in team activities, group discussions and presentations in lessons and they develop good skills in problem solving and critical analysis.
- Students develop adequate skills for employment. They learn about money management, how to prepare a curriculum vitae and their rights and responsibilities at work. Few students, apart from those studying health and social care, are involved in work-experience. Visiting speakers from industry occasionally make informative presentations to students and a number of employers attend the careers fair. Staff readily provide information on advanced apprenticeships to students.
- Most students gain useful additional qualifications and are involved in a range of interesting enrichment activities. Students value these activities as they help to develop their skills in leadership and taking responsibility. They also provide good opportunities for students to widen their friendship groups.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect good outcomes for students. Teachers are enthusiastic, have high expectations of students and they provide them with very good care and support. The large majority of lessons are good or outstanding. A small minority require improvement.
- In good or better lessons, teachers use a wide variety of activities to engage students well. Teachers use good questioning which challenges students effectively to further their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers manage lessons well to allow students to participate productively in role-play, group work and discussions. Most students make good progress in these lessons, but teachers do not meet the needs of the most able effectively enough to ensure that they also make good progress.
- Students make very good or excellent progress in outstanding lessons. The pace of these lessons is brisk; activities are challenging for all students and they match well their individual needs. Teachers fully engage students in learning throughout the lessons. In an excellent physical education lesson about warming up and cooling down, the teacher demonstrated outstanding management of learning. The teacher linked strongly theory and practical activities and expertly enabled students to use their knowledge of anatomy and physiology. The lesson was fast-paced and purposeful with good stretch and challenge to stimulate learning for students of all abilities. The teacher made sharply focused assessments of their learning and then provided them with highly effective coaching and support to accelerate their learning.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers dominate learning activities and do not engage with students sufficiently. Students are passive, make little contribution and they make slow progress. Teachers do not always make skilful use of technology to improve and enliven lessons.

Teachers do not always check frequently and well enough students’ learning. Learning activities do not always develop students’ ability to think critically and deeply enough about topics.

- Teachers plan most lessons well, but lessons do not always meet the needs of the most able students. Extension activities for the most able are not always sufficiently demanding and are sometimes set at the same level of difficulty as previous work.
- Teachers use a good variety of resources to support learning, and students find the college’s virtual learning environment (VLE) particularly helpful for catching up, revising or researching topics.
- Target setting for students is usually effective, but is less robust in a few areas. It is not sufficiently clear in all areas to improve fully students’ progress. Students and staff use most targets well. Students are motivated to improve their achievement and they are aware of the progress they are making.
- Assessment is good. Teachers use timely and effective assessment to check students understanding and progress in lessons. Assignment briefs enable students to understand the objectives of the assessment and what they have to do to achieve good grades. Teachers mark students’ written work well. They almost always identify and correct errors in spelling and punctuation and provide detailed, developmental and supportive feedback for students. The development of English is good in most lessons. Teachers help students to develop the accurate use of subject terms, vocabulary and academic writing skills. Teachers do not develop students’ mathematical skills sufficiently in most subjects not strongly related to mathematics.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Students receive very useful advice on choosing subjects to meet their career aspirations at the very start of the enrolment process. Very few students make changes to their programmes of study after the first few weeks of term. Managers and staff provide helpful sessions for Year 9 school pupils to help motivate them before they start their GCSE programmes.
- Managers and staff provide comprehensive, high quality support for students. Students value the care and support they receive from all staff. Teachers and tutors use assessment outcomes, progress reviews and attendance data very effectively to identify students at risk of not succeeding on their courses. Good intervention strategies enable these students to get back on track in good time.
- Teachers use well-planned and effective induction exercises to identify students’ support needs and to direct students, appropriately, to additional support sessions. Managers do not routinely monitor students’ attendance and progress at additional support sessions. Students who receive additional support find it valuable and appreciate the time and care they receive from all staff to help them achieve their goals. The college’s study centres at times, are too small to satisfy demand.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is inconsistent. Students work in a friendly environment with an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students discuss aspects of equality and diversity related to their main subjects, should they arise, but opportunities to discuss wider aspects of diversity by teachers are often missed. Lesson activities do not always meet the needs of all students.

ICT for practitioners

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and reflect outcomes for students which also require improvement. Success rates are high on the AS-level ICT qualification and students are making good progress with the majority working above their target grade. Overall, students make average progress. They develop good skills for employment such as self-

confidence, team working and independent learning skills. Students understand the practical application of ICT well. A relatively small proportion of students, who start AS-level qualifications, progress to A-level qualifications. Attendance and punctuality are good.

- Teachers plan the most effective lessons well and teach energetically. They develop students' independent learning skills well in these lessons. Teachers often enable students to develop useful skills in collaborative learning through team working. Lesson activities meet individual needs and are appropriately challenging for all students. In one lesson, students compared the effectiveness of a range of databases well. Teachers use questioning, practical activities, discussions and paired work effectively in the best lessons to check learning and to ensure students make good progress.
- In weaker lessons, the breadth and depth of topics are often insufficiently demanding. Teachers spend too much time talking and the level of challenge to meet the needs of all students is insufficient. Teachers support students needing more help effectively so that they meet the required standards. Work is not demanding enough for those more able and in a minority of lessons all students complete the same tasks. Teachers do not develop well enough students' higher-level skills, knowledge and understanding. Questioning is too superficial and not probing enough for students to develop or analyse answers well. In a few lessons, teachers do not check learning effectively to ensure more able students are learning at an appropriate level.
- Teachers and students make good use of ICT to extend and improve learning. Students frequently study independently outside the classroom. They value the well-populated VLE and use it frequently. Students find its extensive resources which include tutorial topics, animation, videos, handouts and homework very helpful.
- Teachers initially assess students' work at the beginning of the course and identify support needs effectively. They assess students' work effectively throughout the course and set and mark students' work regularly. Teachers provide students with helpful comments so that students know what they need to do to improve.
- Students receive useful support in study sessions which helps them to revise and to complete their assignments effectively. Teachers care for their students and frequently monitor students' progress to ensure they are making sufficient progress to complete their courses. Teachers set individual targets to improve the performance of any student in danger of not completing their course successfully.
- Students enjoy their studies and appreciate the care and support they receive from teachers. However, staff do not always make appropriate adjustments for students with dyslexia. Students receive good information, advice and guidance before enrolling at college. They appreciate having the opportunity to take taster sessions during induction that help them decide which course to take.
- Teachers develop students' English skills frequently and effectively. They develop students' mathematical skills in lessons, but to a lesser extent. For example, students consider the use of different fonts, formal layouts for letters, note-taking and how to produce hand written draft work, but manipulate data electronically only in a few lessons. Teachers regularly highlight and correct errors in spelling and grammar when marking students' work.
- Students are respectful of each other, work well together and have good awareness of diversity. Students decide how to meet best the diverse needs of users by considering a range of specific needs such as sensory impairments, when producing user guides.

English**16-19 study programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect good outcomes for students. Success rates are consistently above the high national average. Students make at least average progress and many make good progress. They are articulate and display good subject knowledge. No significant achievement gaps exist between different groups. The subject has relatively few male students. Attendance and punctuality are good. Most students progress to higher education after leaving college.
- Teachers are highly committed to their students' success and encourage them to aim for continuous improvement, but lessons are not always demanding enough for the more able. Teachers know their students well, and encourage them to extend and develop their learning effectively. They use questions effectively to engage students. In almost all lessons, students work productively, collaborate and share ideas well. For example, English literature students discussed complex questions of morality in a contemporary novel with insight and maturity. English language students were able to identify and comment on sophisticated linguistic devices such as antithesis and anaphora.
- In outstanding lessons, teachers have very effective and clear strategies to challenge the more able including extension activities and individual tasks to meet the learning needs of each student. In these lessons, teachers provide sharply focused activities which fully occupy students and students work with energy and enthusiasm.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers sometimes fail to develop the higher-level skills of which the more able students are capable, and group work does not engage every student so that they all work productively. In a small minority of lessons, students do not engage in learning for long periods.
- Teachers plan most lessons well. Schemes of work are clear and detailed, with an appropriate focus on assessment objectives. Teachers use a good balance of whole-class teaching, pair and group work to develop learning well. Teachers monitor learning effectively and check students' understanding well. Teachers are knowledgeable and create a real enthusiasm for English in most students. Resources are comprehensive and support students' learning well. However, most teachers do not use technology most effectively to improve learning.
- Teachers effectively assess students during induction and refer individuals for study support, as appropriate. Students speak appreciatively of the individual help and support they receive from teachers, both in lessons and at other times. The VLE has many helpful resources for students.
- Assessment is good. Teachers regularly check students' understanding in lessons and give detailed, helpful feedback on written work. Students know how to improve their work after receiving feedback. Teachers prepare students well for coursework assignments. Records of students' progress against course targets are not always sufficiently clear.
- Students understand the need for correct grammar and spelling, and teachers emphasise the importance of accurate work. Students studying GCSE English receive very specific advice on using more sophisticated structures and vocabulary. Teachers do not develop sufficiently mathematical skills in the subject area. Enrichment opportunities, such as writing workshops, theatre visits and visits to First World War battlefields enhance learning and improve students' motivation and enjoyment.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Teachers work effectively with local schools and provide helpful taster lessons for Year 11 pupils. Induction is valuable at helping students to settle into their courses quickly.

- Teachers promote equality and diversity effectively through, for example, considering male and female language use and studying literature from other cultures. Staff and students treat each other with respect and courtesy.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- The Principal and the governors have an ambitious and clear vision for the college set out in a detailed and purposeful strategic plan. The plan promotes high expectations for all students. It details challenging targets, an ambition for consistently good and outstanding teaching, the importance of an enriching learning experience and the achievement of outstanding outcomes. Managers' have well-advanced plans to expand to recruit more overseas students and to be more inclusive locally.
- Teaching, learning and assessment and student outcomes in most subjects are good and a minority of students achieve outstanding results. Progression rates for advanced level students are very positive with 43% of those students entering higher education, enrolling at Russell Group universities.
- The recent restructuring of management and staff roles has had a positive impact on the running of the college. The Principal provides good leadership and senior managers understand what they need to do to improve the learning for all students.
- Subject area management is mostly good, but in a number the identification of weaker aspects of teaching, learning and assessment and their improvement lacks sufficient rigour. For example, subject area managers do not always make sure that all students undertake work that is sufficiently challenging and that they track students' progress rigorously.
- Governors understand their role and contribute effectively to strategic planning and validating the college's self assessment. Managers provide well-presented information which enables governors to use their highly-developed professional skills to effectively monitor the college's performance and raise challenging questions.
- Governors have links with the curriculum, but their broader understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning is not sufficiently thorough. The leadership team intervenes effectively where the performance of a teacher is unsatisfactory. The process includes a recovery plan with key objectives. In most cases close monitoring leads to improvement, but a few teachers have left the college.
- Managers routinely conduct staff appraisals and reviews and all teachers undertake thirty hours of professional development each year. However, key appraisal objectives are not sufficiently measureable and they do not link clearly to subject areas' improvement plans or to college targets. The match between the outcomes of lesson observations and related development opportunities requires improvement.
- Paperwork for the quality assurance processes is thorough and understood by staff. Managers and staff use well the accurate management information data. The self-assessment report identifies precisely the key strengths and areas for improvement. Managers provide detailed plans on actions to resolve areas for improvement and they monitor their progress closely.
- Subject self-assessment reports vary in quality and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment managers and staff do not routinely identify.
- Managers collect students' views systematically and they act on their concerns. Most feedback from students, both at course level and across the college, is very positive.
- The lesson observation scheme, although well established, does not have sufficient rigour to ensure the raising of teaching standards consistently across subject areas.
- The system to track students' inyear progress is under review and sometimes lacks sufficient clarity.

- The curriculum is relevant to the college's mission. The college offers most subjects at A level and AS level. It has a small provision at intermediate level and a few vocational courses at advanced level. Recently added courses achieve good outcomes and progression for students. Local schools support managers' plans to expand vocational courses, especially those in more disadvantaged areas. In a few subject areas, links with employers are good, but underdeveloped in most.
- Displays, tutorial and specialist activities promote equality and diversity well. Its promotion is good in a minority of subject areas, but underdeveloped in others. The college meets legislative requirements and the college has a harmonious environment. Students feel managers and staff treat them fairly. Students with high learning support needs receive good support and achieve well. Managers have well-established arrangements to monitor the performance of specific groups and includes an analysis of success rates and progress data. The achievement gap between male and female students has narrowed slightly, but it is still too large, although all achievements remain mostly good.
- Students feel physically and emotionally safe and arrangements for keeping them safe are good. Staff and students know who to approach if an issue arises. In the rare case of bullying and harassment, managers and staff take complaints seriously and take appropriate actions.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. It maintains a single central record of appropriate checks on staff, including criminal record checks. The college provides good support for vulnerable young people and liaises well with external agencies.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
ICT for practitioners	3
English	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,522
	Part-time: 7
Principal/CEO	Martin Ward
Date of previous inspection	May 2008
Website address	www.ssfc.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	N/A	N/A	16	N/A	1,505	1	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	7	0	N/A	N/A
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+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	2							
Full-time	2							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 							

Contextual information

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College is located in Shrewsbury which is a market town in Shropshire. The local population is mostly White British with around 2% of people of Black minority ethnic heritage. A slightly higher proportion of Black minority ethnic students attend college than in the local population. School pupils attainment of five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics is above the national average. Most students study advanced level courses, but a small number study at intermediate level. The college offers 44 AS-level and A-level subjects, eight subjects at GCSE and a small number of BTEC courses. The main employment sectors locally are hospitality and catering, travel and leisure, health and social care and technology.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Gloria Dolan HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the assistant principal curriculum and quality 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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