

Weston College

General further education college

Inspection dates		9–13 December 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding-1
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This college is outstanding because:

- The vast majority of learners successfully complete their courses, often achieving higher grades than expected when they started their courses.
- Learners receive outstanding support that ensures the vast majority of them reach their potential. Learners are confident, articulate and receive exceptionally good support to help them to develop their skills in English and mathematics.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and result in the vast majority of learners making excellent progress. Teachers and tutors are adept at ensuring that learners work hard, both in lessons and through effective assignment work. Learners enjoy their time at college and almost all of them progress to employment or further study.
- Learners benefit greatly from the culture of respect, hard work and enjoyment that permeates the college. Their behaviour is excellent and they have very purposeful and productive working relationships with their teachers and other college staff.
- Through highly effective partnerships, the college has brought very many people into education and training who may not have regarded it as their natural destination. It has helped them to succeed in gaining qualifications and finding employment.
- Outstanding leadership and management have improved teaching, learning and assessment and raised standards very effectively across the college. Employers and community partners are closely involved in the development of the college's curriculum, which responds very well to the needs identified locally, regionally and nationally.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that managers and teachers take effective action to improve the small minority of underperforming courses, especially in the GCE AS- and A-level provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="121 293 1426 501">▪ The proportion of learners successfully completing their courses has improved significantly over the past five years and is now very high in almost all areas of the college. There are no discrepancies in learners' achievements and performance in relation to their gender, disability or ethnicity. This sustained improvement has been achieved against a backdrop of significant growth in the numbers of learners and extensive improvements to accommodation, the curriculum and resources. <li data-bbox="121 506 1426 792">▪ The overwhelming majority of learners make good or outstanding progress, regardless of their level of attainment on entry. They are attentive and learn quickly in lessons. Learners with learning or physical disabilities make outstanding progress and can live more independent and enriched lives through the support, education and training they receive at college. Many of those who study on advanced vocational programmes and GCE AS-level subjects achieve grades that are higher than would be expected from their attainment when they started their course. The college provides very strong support to learners to help them to move into higher education or employment when they leave, and the overwhelming majority of them do so. <li data-bbox="121 797 1426 972">▪ Learners develop very good, and often outstanding, practical skills. Catering students use their skills well to create well-presented dishes to a very high standard. Plumbing students work to very fine tolerances in designing complex pipework systems using a wide variety of materials. Art students create imaginative and professional work. Attendance in lessons is high across the college. <li data-bbox="121 976 1426 1151">▪ Learners' English and mathematics are well developed. Their written work is at least good and very often outstanding. Learners are articulate and can explain their work well. They enjoy discussions and their answers to teachers' questions are well phrased and thoughtful. The overwhelming majority of them achieve their qualifications in functional mathematics and English. <li data-bbox="121 1155 1426 1308">▪ The vast majority of apprenticeship programmes have very high success rates and apprentices achieve their qualifications within the planned time. Most apprentices develop their interpersonal, communication and employability skills extremely well and many undertake additional qualifications that complement their main area of study. <li data-bbox="121 1312 1426 1420">▪ Learners' outcomes on the college's partnership provision range from good to outstanding. Much of this provision is targeted at disadvantaged young people and successfully helps them to gain qualifications and find employment. <li data-bbox="121 1424 1426 1576">▪ The college has an extensive and successful range of full- and part-time programmes for school students aged 14 to 16. The proportion of these learners who successfully complete their qualifications is very high at 90%. As a result of their success, most of them continue to study at the college when they reach 16 years of age. <li data-bbox="121 1581 1426 1693">▪ There is a very small minority of courses where the proportion of learners who successfully complete is below the national average. The most significant of these are a few GCE A-level subjects. The success rates in many of these subjects are, however, rising steadily. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="121 1827 1426 1957">▪ Learners benefit substantially from excellent teaching, learning and assessment, coupled with very strong pastoral and academic support, both in and out of the classroom. The successful combination of all these elements has been the main factor that has led to the significant improvement in students' success. <li data-bbox="121 1962 1426 2078">▪ Well-planned lessons meet the needs of all learners effectively. Teachers' skilful use of questions develops learners' understanding very effectively and helps them to learn quickly. Discussions in lessons are stimulating and enthusiastic and help to extend learners' knowledge and skills. 	

- Technology is used very well to enliven lessons and to help learners to study independently. For example, in many lessons, learners use laptop computers or their own mobile phones to record aspects of their lessons and learn from these recordings. The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) and the excellent range of resources in the library are used very well in much of the college to develop and improve independent learning and research skills.
- The vast majority of teachers and assessors are well qualified and use their occupational and industrial expertise very effectively in lessons, explaining to learners how to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. They are also excellent role models for learners who respect their knowledge and understanding and want to learn from them.
- Teachers know their learners well and use detailed and well-informed profiles of learners to ensure that teaching, learning and support fully meet their individual needs. In a small minority of lessons, however, teaching does not keep the attention of all students well enough and does not challenge the more able students sufficiently.
- Teachers and tutors use highly relevant tutorials to help learners to develop very good personal, social and independent learning skills. Teachers' regular and detailed monitoring of learners' progress using the electronic individual learning plans (e-ILPs) ensures that learners meet their challenging targets.
- Academic and pastoral support is outstanding. All learners receive exceptionally strong support, including specialist support where needed, contributing significantly to the high success rates. There are excellent arrangements to support learners with welfare problems. For example, learners find the provision of nursing and counselling services in particular very helpful.
- Assessments of learners' progress and achievement are outstanding. The quality of feedback on their work ensures learners are clear about the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. In the vast majority of lessons, mistakes in English and mathematics are corrected thoroughly and accurately, an important element in ensuring they can complete their programmes of study. Teachers ensure learners have a clear understanding of the arrangements and requirements for assessment on their course and this makes sure they can organise and produce their best work and complete assignments on time.
- On apprenticeship programmes, assessment is frequent and well planned. Assessors motivate apprentices through positive, constructive feedback and advice that help them to complete their course on time. Assessors provide excellent pastoral support for apprentices during workplace reviews and throughout the programme. Support to develop excellent English and mathematics for apprentices is highly effective, as reflected in the standard of work in learners' portfolios.
- Learners' experiences are enhanced significantly through an excellent enrichment programme that includes visits, talks by outside speakers, meetings with employers and work experience. These elements are very important in supporting the college's successful introduction of programmes of study. Competition work lets learners demonstrate their skills, as well as developing more advanced skills through the challenge for those who are more able. Music production learners gain valuable performance experience through a programme of live concerts. Business, computing and catering learners benefit through working on projects in close collaboration with local businesses.
- Tutors, teachers and support staff assess learners' needs extremely thoroughly and accurately when they start their courses. They provide the right support very quickly. Learning support assistants provide outstanding support for learners, contributing to the rapid progress they make. Support in lessons is carefully tailored to learners' individual needs and helps learners to improve their confidence and skills quickly. The high number of learners receiving this support achieve very well.
- Learners receive excellent information, advice and guidance and hence they make well-informed course choices. A team of staff works successfully in local schools to provide an extensive range of pre-course advice and guidance. The college makes very good use of its employer links, the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus, to place students into jobs, support them in their programmes of study and promote apprenticeships.

- Equality and diversity are promoted very well through a wide range of activities including regular and highly pertinent themed events. For example, catering learners deepened their understanding of other cultures by investigating cuisine from other countries. The great majority of teachers promote equality and diversity well and use opportunities in their lessons to introduce and discuss topics to help learners to further their understanding. For example, in a computing lesson, learners discussed the use of adaptive technology to support people with disabilities. In a few lessons teachers missed opportunities to fully explore and develop equality and diversity topics in their lessons.

Science	
Learning programmes for 16-18	Good
Learning programmes for 19+	

- Teaching, learning and assessment in science are good. Despite this, outcomes in recent years have been just below the national rate. Through the introduction of new teaching staff, better support for learners and the setting and marking of more homework, learners now make good progress.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully so that learners are active participants in a range of activities that include model making, group tasks, problem solving and practical work. As a result, learners enjoy lessons and attendance rates are high.
- In lessons, teachers check learning by effective questioning and good use of selected past examination questions. Learners are kept 'on their toes' by frequently being called upon, and in the most effective lessons the teacher responds to their initial response by asking them to provide more detail or by asking a further, more stretching, question. In most lessons, the focus is kept closely on helping learners to understand scientific concepts so that they can apply their understanding across their studies in science.
- Most lessons are good and some are outstanding. In one particularly successful lesson the learners' understanding of protein synthesis, a very complex topic, was extended by a short animated video of the process, followed by a task requiring them to make plasticine models which illustrated molecular behaviour. Finally, they were asked to explain the process verbally, with reference to their model. Their explanations not only showed that they understood the process well but also that they were able to discuss this complex process using the correct terminology.
- Although teachers know their learners well and follow their progress closely, in a minority of lessons learners are set tasks which are not always appropriate for their abilities. This occasionally results in more able learners who have completed a piece of work having to wait while the rest of the group catches up. Subject enrichment opportunities which would provide extended learning beyond the classroom, particularly for the most able, are limited.
- Assessment is good. Learners are expected to complete homework at least weekly and nearly all do. They present their work well and make few spelling or grammatical errors. Teachers mark work carefully and accurately.
- Learners carry out practical work safely and calmly and they, and their teachers, are supported effectively by technicians. The laboratories provide a modern and safe environment and have a good range of resources and equipment.
- Learners receive very good pastoral and learning support. There are weekly 'drop in' sessions and those learners requiring additional help because of a learning or physical difficulty have comprehensive and effective support from support workers in their lessons. Learners value the one-to-one conversations they have with their tutor.

- The proportion of learners progressing to higher education is satisfactory and students are encouraged and helped to apply through talks in tutorial sessions and trips. An undergraduate from a local university provides effective additional one-to-one support in many lessons.
- Teachers and learners work well together and there is a culture of mutual respect in this area. While some teachers took advantage of opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons, in a few lessons these opportunities were missed.

Motor vehicle engineering

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in motor vehicle engineering are good, leading to the high proportion of learners based at the college successfully completing their courses. Apprentices make good progress, but success rates on this recently established and much smaller provision are below the national rate.
- Learners generally make good progress and attendance at lessons is high. In the workplace, apprentices progress well, taking on more complex tasks as their skills develop. Learners and apprentices develop good industry-standard skills and use tools and equipment with confidence.
- Teachers have good industrial experience and demonstrate best commercial practice in their teaching. Workshop and theory lessons are generally well planned and designed to provide stimulating and interesting learning activities. Teachers use technology in their teaching to add interest and enhance learners' understanding. In one lesson, an interesting interactive quiz was used effectively to reinforce engine component identification, using graphics and pictures. The college's good VLE helps learners to consolidate and extend their understanding of the work covered in lessons.
- Learners' work is of a high standard and replicates good commercial practice; for example, in a workshop practical session, learners used good diagnostic skills to identify faults correctly in electronic injector systems, using multi-meters and other test equipment to check continuity and resistance in circuits. In another workshop, learners removed complete exhaust systems with confidence, correctly identified faulty components and researched and priced replacement parts. In the workplace, apprentices work independently with minimum supervision. One apprentice carried out a winter service on a vehicle independently, used test equipment to check the battery condition and the charging system and correctly reported on wear on brakes and tyres. Employers report that apprentices' skills help their businesses to be more successful and meet customers' expectations more frequently.
- Theory lessons generally provide a good knowledge base for practical activities. In classroom and workplace sessions, teachers and assessors skilfully use question and answer techniques to stretch learners and to check their understanding. In better sessions, learners are encouraged to reflect on their task to develop their problem-solving skills. In a small minority of lessons learners are not fully involved as teachers talk too much.
- Workshops provide a good training environment, equipped with a range of industry-standard resources, tools and equipment, comparable to a modern commercial garage. Learners work safely. A few vehicles are in poor condition, preventing learners from completing tasks to a high standard.
- Learners develop good skills in English, mathematics and ICT. Learners are comfortable with mathematics, calculating component costs, capacities and using combustion formulae. Learners also demonstrate good IT skills using computers for research, auto data and preparing presentations. Teachers return marked work promptly, with helpful comments to enable learners to improve, and highlighting spelling and grammatical errors.

- Learners and apprentices receive good support. Teachers and assessors have a good understanding of individual learners' needs and work with them to ensure learners reach their full potential and develop good employability skills. Learners undertake diagnostics tests to identify any support needs, followed by a comprehensive induction programme, to ensure they are on the right course. Assessments are rigorous, timely and fair. For a minority of apprentices, targets are not sufficiently clear to ensure they are on track to meet their completion dates.
- Equality and diversity often are well promoted, with learners working collaboratively in pairs and groups, showing respect, sharing ideas and helping each other. Learners are polite and well behaved in class and in social areas around the college. In a few lessons and reviews, opportunities to promote cultural diversity were missed.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, resulting in sustained outstanding success rates across all programmes. Learners and apprentices enjoy their work at college and in local salons immensely and greatly value the highly-focused and wide-ranging care provided by teachers. Very high numbers of learners gain employment in hairdressing, barbering and beauty therapy when they leave college.
- Support for learners is outstanding. This support is tailored very carefully to meet each learner's needs, including linking with external agencies to find specific help for individual learners. Very detailed and effective regular reviews with each learner ensure that they are working hard, meeting their targets and making progress.
- In the vast majority of lessons, learners are enthusiastic and engaged in relevant and interesting tasks. The commercial salons in the college are busy with a wide and diverse range of clients who have high expectations and receive a contemporary hairdressing service from learners. Teachers frequently use very good questioning techniques to provide additional challenge.
- Learners are very articulate and demonstrate very confident communication and excellent client-care skills. They make clients feel at ease and are good at assessing their requests and meeting requirements. They work well together and organise their work well as a team.
- Apprentices are very well supported in their workplaces. Hairdressing apprentices demonstrate exceptional technical skills that often far exceed the requirements of the qualification. They demonstrate exceptionally good skills in highly fashionable haircutting, ambitious colour techniques and extremely creative long hair work.
- Employers work closely with the college to ensure that apprentices are given challenging work to help them to develop their skills. The well-established beauty therapy apprenticeship is particularly effective, resulting in exceptionally well-trained therapists who are highly valued by local employers.
- College-based learners benefit from very well planned work experience that gives them extremely useful insights into professional and commercial practice. They are able to work alongside stylists and therapists to see what commercial speed, accuracy and flair are needed to be successful.
- Initial assessment is wide ranging and rigorous. Learners are required to complete a number of innovative tasks before they start, and during their induction, to assess their skills. The outcomes of these assessments are accurate and are used well to place learners on courses very carefully tailored to meet their individual capacities and needs.
- Learners produce very good, independently researched assignment work. Teachers provide effective feedback, balancing positive praise with clear direction for future improvements. The

development of learners' use of English language is well supported through routine correction of spelling and grammar.

- Learners are fully aware of their next steps in learning. Progression to higher-level, college-based programmes or apprenticeships is very good. Apprenticeship options are very broad; for example, in addition to hairdressing, the college has a very successful apprenticeship programme for beauty therapy and barbering. Teachers provide aspirational advice and guidance.
- Learners have a very clear understanding of the broader concepts of equality and diversity through an informative tutorial programme. However, the themes and values of equality and diversity are not always overtly promoted in lessons.

Sport and public services

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. This is reflected in the outstanding success rates on all programmes, which are significantly above national averages. The vast majority of learners achieve well above their expected grades and progress on to further study or employment.
- Teaching is engaging, active and purposeful. Teachers set very high expectations of learners and are passionate about their subject; as a result, students are inspired and become enthusiastic learners. Theory and practice are closely linked in lessons. Learners' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary.
- Support for learners is outstanding. Learners and staff demonstrate an ethos of mutual respect. Learners value highly the support they receive both in and out of the classroom. Learners attribute much of their success to the care and subject expertise of staff, which has motivated them to achieve far beyond their expectations. Learners see staff as role models for their profession.
- Lessons are very well planned. They have a variety of activities that maintain learners' interest, extend their understanding and skills and are conducted at a brisk pace. For example, in a sport lesson, learners' higher level analytical and evaluative skills were developed and extended through their discussions around what motivates sportsmen and women. Highly skilled questioning and probing by the teacher provided opportunity for reflection and challenge, through a highly interactive and enjoyable session. A public services lesson investigating discipline proved equally stimulating for the learners.
- The seamless planning and integration of support for learners have a very positive impact on their attendance, retention and success. For example, support workers on intermediate-level courses have public services backgrounds and work closely with teachers to support individuals and answer their questions. Learners value the coaching and support provided to help them overcome barriers to learning, including the setting of short-term achievable goals for attendance, personal organisation and self-confidence.
- Learners attend a wide range of enrichment activities. Academies in rugby, football, golf and martial arts are well attended and provide access to elite sports development. Professional coaches lead these academies. The department also has 'feeder academies' in local schools and the community, including women's football and netball. These are run by learners who have achieved coaching qualifications, to raise awareness, develop skills and provide them with real work experience.
- The assessment of learners' work is very good. The learners receive very detailed feedback, with clear references to assessment criteria and how to improve their work further. They are motivated to aim for a high grade each time, and many of them achieve this.

- Learners benefit from excellent pre-course advice and guidance. For example, learners on intermediate courses have a 'Bridging Week' that lets them experience an advanced course. They attend a careers fair with employers, followed by individual reviews that help them to make a more informed choice. Consequently, learners are placed on programmes on which they succeed.
- Learners make very good progress in developing English and mathematics and there is a strong focus on the development of technical language. In all lessons the accuracy of spelling and grammar is stressed and reinforced by teachers. Teachers routinely correct mistakes in learners' English in their written work.
- The planning and promotion of equality and diversity are outstanding. For example, a teacher led a thoughtful and purposeful session on current issues in sport. This provided a platform to consider a wide range of equality and diversity issues; learners' understanding and beliefs were challenged in a very sensitive way.

Independent living and leisure

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Consequently, learners make excellent progress with their personal, social, independent living and employability skills as well as gaining a range of very useful qualifications. Almost all of them have significant barriers to progress, and for many of them attending the college is a life-changing experience. They improve their ability to interact with others extremely well and successfully manage their next steps in learning or employment with confidence. Learners' attendance is high. For many of the learners this is the first time they have managed regular attendance.
- Teachers and support workers work seamlessly together to develop learners' skills through a variety of stimulating activities. Learners clearly enjoy being in lessons. For example, a group of learners produced and performed an end-of-term play successfully, in spite of many having major difficulties with confidence and public speaking. Another group of learners estimated cooking times for a Christmas dinner they were about to prepare and showed a very good understanding of cooking techniques. Other learners produced lively and interesting films through effective editing.
- Staff are passionate about improving learners' life chances; they challenge learners well and ensure that they provide them with appropriate small steps of learning. They use targets skilfully to set learners manageable goals and then monitor progress towards achieving them regularly. Learners use the skills they have learned in college to improve their home lives. For example, learners described how the strategies they have learned to manage their anger have led to them maintaining calmer and more productive relationships outside college.
- Very innovative use of technology ensures learners become much more effective independent learners. For example, in the well-equipped teaching kitchen, they use tablet computers to activate short video clips on such topics as how to wash up correctly. Learners take increasing responsibility for managing their own lives via the use of assistive technology. Learners improve their English and mathematics through their vocational activities.
- Support for learning is outstanding; support workers are highly experienced and often very well qualified, with specific areas of expertise such as behaviour management or visual impairment. Links to specialist provision and support agencies are very strong and bring immense benefits to learners. Learners' communication skills are greatly advanced through the work of the college's speech and language therapist. Levels of support are carefully reduced as necessary to ensure learners do not become dependent on staff.

- Almost all learners take part in work placements which prepare them well for their future lives. A wide range of placement options ensures learners can sample a variety of jobs and make a more informed decision about what they want to do when they leave college. The monitoring of progress in work placements is regular and thorough.
- The support provided in the college’s specialist centre for learners with autistic spectrum disorder is outstanding. The support of specialist staff, coupled with residential facilities in an attractive building, prepares learners extremely well for independent living. For example, former learners are now able to live successfully in university halls of residence, something which many of them would have been unlikely to be able to do before attending the centre.
- Arrangements to support learners joining and leaving the programme are outstanding. The college has excellent links to local schools, including special schools, and ensures potential learners benefit from a comprehensive familiarisation programme before enrolling on a course of study. Excellent links to employers and other educational institutions, including the provision of awareness training and support for employers, ensure learners sustain employment or further study.
- Learners have a very good understanding of key issues relating to their welfare through a comprehensive tutorial programme. They view the college as a very safe learning environment and one which enables them to make progress in their lives. Staff and learners value and respect each other. By the examples of achievement they demonstrate, learners act as laudable ambassadors for the potential of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the college and the wider community.

Foundation English

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently very good with much outstanding practice. As a result, a very high proportion of learners successfully complete their functional skills qualifications in English. Teachers set learning in vocationally relevant contexts or those which allow learners to draw on their personal experiences. For example, in one lesson, a case study of a business enterprise was used to improve advanced writing skills for motor vehicle learners. Learners are engaged by relevant tasks and receive individual support to produce work in English that is of a high standard.
- Support for learners is outstanding and significantly contributes to the outstanding success rates. Learners benefit greatly from additional support in lessons. Many lessons include learning support tutors as well as vocational teachers. These tutors are fully involved in lessons and their contributions are carefully planned so that learners are able to ask questions and discuss their own work more fully.
- Learners are set clear and challenging targets to help them to improve their English. Their progress towards these targets is constantly monitored and learners’ progress is recorded on their work. Examples of learners’ work showed that the learners are not only advised to extend their descriptive vocabulary, but are also given advice on how to do this by using resources on the internet. How successfully they have done this is followed up in their subsequent work.
- Learners’ abilities in English are assessed very well when the learners start their course. Teachers use this information to construct detailed profiles of their learners’ strengths and areas for development. These profiles are used in lessons to focus learners on their individual targets and to provide them with detailed feedback on their work. In a writing lesson, hospitality learners were given personal targets to improve their writing as part of a group exercise. Learners assessed their own skills and those of their peers against these targets and then set themselves further targets to meet in their next writing task. Their written work was improved markedly

through this exercise and they gained additional insights into other people’s problems with writing.

- Teachers’ feedback on learners’ work in lessons is prompt, accurate and contributes well to their progress. Sophisticated ‘question and answer’ are frequently used to check and challenge learners, leading to a deeper understanding of language and linguistic features by learners. Feedback on written work is excellent, and learners use it to identify areas they need to improve and to develop strategies for making further progress. Learners comment on how the feedback they have received is an excellent tool for identifying what they need to work on and how to do this. They report that their performance in their assessed work has improved due to the quality of the feedback they have received.
- The foundation English teaching team works very closely with vocational teachers from across the college to help them to develop their learners’ English skills. The team has had a significant and remarkable impact on improving the vocational teachers’ confidence in addressing learners’ errors in written work. As a result, learners’ English is routinely and accurately corrected by teachers across the college.
- This excellent approach to helping learners to improve their English is supported by a number of best practice innovations. A common assessment framework for feedback on English is used. Vocational tutors’ feedback on English skills in learners’ work is to a standard that would be considered best practice in many English departments. Initiatives such as the use of an ‘English diary’ for creative arts students allows vocational tutors, the student and the English tutors to implement a seamlessly unified approach to English development that assures the learners of the importance of English for their vocational success and their wider life skills. The development of a joint vocational and English programme in hairdressing and beauty therapy makes a significant impact on learners’ progress in English. Learners are enthused by the activities in lessons and consequently become convinced of the importance of English for their careers.

Business administration and management

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in business administration and management are good, leading to the good outcomes achieved by learners. Staff have a fine rapport with learners and high expectations of them. Learners’ attendance and punctuality are generally very good and the learners enjoy their studies.
- Teachers use a wide range of activities effectively to ensure learners are engaged and active in their learning. As a result, most learners make good progress in lessons. However, in the few less effective lessons observed, not all learners made good progress because they were not sufficiently engaged by the teaching.
- Teachers make good use of up-to-date examples from business to illustrate key learning points and link classroom learning to actual business practice. For example, in one lesson, learners applied theories of employee motivation to real business situations. Apprentices in the workplace benefit significantly from the very effective support they receive from their assessor helping them link their learning to their work role.
- The college has extensive links with local businesses, which provide many learners with opportunities to develop skills such as enterprise, teamwork, innovation and creativity in real business situations. For instance, a local car dealership supports a competition where business learners design a promotional campaign, with aspects of the winning campaign being used by the company. Learners also develop advanced business skills through the extensive range of relevant projects in which they participate.

- Teachers check learning effectively and often ask pertinent and testing questions to further learners' understanding. However, in the small number of less effective lessons, there are insufficient checks to ensure all learners have understood before the teacher moves on to the next topic.
- Teachers and assessors carefully track learners' and apprentices' progress. Target setting and review for apprentices are particularly strong; apprentices have their progress carefully checked and targets agreed, which are regularly reviewed.
- The college provides effective support for learners and apprentices who need to develop their skills in mathematics and English. For apprentices, the teaching of functional skills is flexible and responsive to their needs. Teachers identify for learners how their work could be improved, highlighting spelling and grammatical errors.
- The quality of learners' written work is good. Learners often produce documents to a professional business standard, making appropriate use of images and charts to help illustrate key business concepts. Teachers accurately mark learners' work and provide detailed feedback to help learners to improve.
- The support learners receive is very good. Teachers are supportive and responsive to learners' needs. Individual and group tutorials provide very effective support that promotes learners' well-being and helps learners overcome barriers to their learning. Learners and apprentices receive effective guidance when progressing on to further study or employment. The college provides a wide range of opportunities for learners to meet employers and representatives from higher education establishments to help inform their choices.
- The use of technology to support learning and assessment is good. The wide range of resources available to learners and apprentices on the college's VLE is well used and enables them to consolidate their learning at a time and place that suits them.
- Learning about equality and diversity is well integrated into teaching and learning activities, and most teachers make the most of opportunities to promote discussion and learning on this theme.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
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- Governors, leaders and managers have exceptionally high expectations for the college and its learners, which are successfully achieved. Within a highly positive ethos of success for all learners, teachers successfully raise the aspirations and ambitions of learners across all areas of the college through excellent teaching and assessment and an outstanding curriculum. This meets the needs of its learners fully and provides exceptional progression opportunities, helping the college to fulfil its mission and 'Build Brighter Futures'.
- The Principal, governors and leaders have provided outstanding strategic direction and vision, immensely improving the involvement of the college in the local community and with employers. This very carefully planned and highly responsive approach to meeting national and local priorities has resulted in several very successful projects that have benefited the community greatly. For example, in conjunction with the Learning Enterprise Partnership (LEP), they have helped create and enable a successful enterprise zone, Junction 21, and, with the local authority, a centre of excellence for autism.
- Leaders and managers have managed change and growth very efficiently and effectively. They have prudently overseen the growth of the college and ensured standards and teaching, learning and assessment have improved alongside growth. They are successfully introducing further study programmes, making very good use of their already extensive network of employers to provide work experience for many more learners.
- Through genuine encouragement for innovation, keeping learners at the heart of their work and involving employers in the changes to the curriculum, they have achieved a culture of enterprise and innovation, where the views of the community and employers are used to create a curriculum that matches their needs. Learners now also have excellent opportunities to study

higher education at the college through the development of its foundation degrees that complement the well-planned expansion of its advanced-level programmes.

- Leaders and managers have meticulously dealt with all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection; for example, the highly successful development of its construction curriculum, and centre for engineering, construction and enterprise (CECE) that has expanded greatly to meet local demand.
- Teachers and assessors improve their teaching and professional skills as a result of a rigorous and comprehensive lesson observation process that integrates effectively with a highly successful system of performance management and continuous professional development. Learners' successes continue to improve as a result.
- Through the college's rigorous quality improvement process, managers carefully monitor the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment. Measures to assess and improve outcomes for learners, particularly those being taught in the community, are thorough and have ensured high standards, with learners receiving the same outstanding support.
- Governors know the college well, are very involved in its life and very well informed about the learners. They support leaders constructively and challenge when appropriate. They ensure leaders and managers continue to strive for excellence and success for learners based firmly on excellent teaching and assessment. Governors involve their learner representatives effectively, and both listen to, and act on, the views of learners.
- Many of the improvements have been propelled through the insightful and accurate self-assessment process. The college's self-assessment identifies its strengths and areas for improvement accurately and clearly. The process of self-assessment is well established, involves staff appropriately and leads to improvements being made quickly. Managers, using their autonomy and the resources at their disposal, ensure actions in the quality improvement plan are carried out decisively. They contribute most effectively to improving teaching and assessment and ensuring the strategic plan is challenging, realistic and aspirational.
- Managers collect the views of learners and employers frequently and use them well to improve programmes and other aspects of college life. For example, the college acted promptly on learners' comments about securing a safer environment by ensuring identity passes were more visible. The design of the new 'library plus' was based on feedback and consultation with learners. Learner ambassadors and mentors provide a valuable and greatly appreciated role in guiding visitors and helping other learners settle into college.
- Highly effective partnership arrangements with a large number of voluntary and community partners ensure that young people and adults can gain access to learning and training where otherwise they would not. Partnerships with employers are particularly strong and used very effectively to develop apprenticeships and jobs. For example, the new traineeship programme provides learners with a wide range of carefully selected placements to match learners' needs. Local and regional employer networks, for example the North Somerset Public Services Partnership, also provide a significant number of places for apprentices.
- All staff and learners receive effective training in equality and diversity that results in a highly inclusive atmosphere of respect. Where it is needed to enable the full participation of learners, the college provides suitable equipment such as tablet computers and assistive technology for learners with learning difficulties. Learners themselves lead initiatives that promote appreciation of diversity, for example the formation of a learner-led lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender alliance (LGBTQA) group. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. The college's procedures are well planned, comprehensive and go beyond expectations in scope and thoroughness. For example, the college provides training and updating in safeguarding for partners and employers. It recently gained a highly prestigious national award for health and safety. Learners feel safe on all the college's sites.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)


Weston 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	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	1	1	1	1	1	1
Outcomes for learners	1	1	1	1	1	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	1	1	1	1	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	1	1	1	1	1

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	2
Motor vehicle	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	1
Sport	1
Public services	1
Independent living and leisure skills	1
Foundation English	1
Business management	2
Administration	2

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 2,883							
	Part-time: 8,114							
Principal/CEO	Dr Paul Phillips OBE							
Date of previous inspection	October 2010							
Website address	www.weston.ac.uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	344	72	510	105	1654	201	0	0
Part-time	453	666	137	852	19	201	1	26
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	16		10		26			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	293	549	99	243	0	7		
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	8							
Part-time	316							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	28							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Insight ■ 2nd Chance ■ Carillion ■ Circomedia ■ KTS Training ■ Learning Partnership West ■ Lifetime Training ■ M & O Training ■ Somax ■ The Park ■ Volunteer Network 							

- 
- Young Gloucestershire
 - Train with pride
 - Alert Training
 - Young Devon
 - Talent express
 - Ansbury
 - Marcbury Associates
 - Young Cornwall
 - Advanced Future Training
 - Pendersons
 - BGH Training

Contextual information

Weston College is a large general further education college based in Weston-super-Mare in Somerset. Weston-super-Mare has a population of around 79,000. Many of the employment opportunities in the area are seasonal. The college has three campuses in the town and works with a large number of partner organisations to provide education and training across the south-west region. There are four 11 to 16 schools in Weston-super-Mare and eight other secondary schools in the North Somerset unitary authority area. The college offers a wide range of vocational and academic further education courses, has over 1000 apprentices employed by a wide range of employers, and provides vocational courses for around 300 pupils aged 14 to 16. It provides education and training to prisons across the south of England. It has significant higher education provision.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Wilf Hudson HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the assistant principal for curriculum, teaching and learning as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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