

Writtle College

Higher education institution

Inspection dates		14–17 January 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- The proportion of learners who successfully complete their qualification has risen markedly over the last three years and is now high.
- Provision is of a high standard in agriculture, animal care and veterinary nursing, visual arts, foundation English and independent living and leisure skills.
- Learners develop excellent practical skills in lessons taught by highly specialist and enthusiastic tutors. Learners develop high standards of behaviour, teamwork, conduct and punctuality to enable them to develop a good work ethic.
- Learners develop good English and mathematics skills in vocational lessons and are very successful in achieving qualifications in these subjects.
- Senior managers closely monitor and react quickly to tutors needing support to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough lessons are good or outstanding, especially theory lessons for advanced-level learners. Lesson observations do not always focus on the learning that takes place in lessons or the progress made by learners.
- Not enough learners achieve high grades and make the progress of which they are capable. Target setting at tutorials and in progress reviews for apprentices is insufficiently precise to help them make excellent progress. The data that tutors and managers have on the progression of learners at the end of their course is incomplete in most subject areas.
- Tutors' marking of learners' work is not always timely and the feedback learners receive does not consistently help them improve.
- Tutors' use of information and learning technology (ILT) to improve teaching, learning and assessment is under-developed in most subject areas.
- Tutors do not take into account sufficiently individual apprentice's prior learning and the opportunities they have in the workplace to complete their training. Quality assurance procedures are under-developed in some aspects of apprenticeship programmes.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of outstanding lessons by tutors making full use of learner’s initial assessment results, target grades and personal development targets when planning lessons. Support tutors to develop their skills to plan lessons that challenge and inspire learners.
- Ensure targets in tutorials and progress reviews are specific and enable learners and apprentices to achieve their full potential by the end of their course and in lessons. Continue to develop the measuring of learners’ progress to help set them challenging targets. Regularly monitor the quality of target setting to ensure it becomes more effective at enabling learners and apprentices to reach their potential.
- Develop further the use of ILT to help learners become more independent and extend their skills and knowledge outside of the classroom.
- Develop the skills of lesson observers further to ensure that they consistently report on what skills and knowledge learners develop rather than focusing too much on the standards of teaching. Monitor the quality of lesson observers’ practice through collaborative working and reviewing lesson observation reports.
- Extend and apply quality assurance procedures to cover all aspects of apprenticeship provision.
- Improve the collection of data on learners’ progression to reduce the proportion of unknown destinations and ensure the curriculum continues to meet the skills needs of local and regional industries.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners have improved significantly over the last three years and are now good. A very high proportion of learners who start courses now achieve their qualifications. Learners at foundation and intermediate level achieve their qualifications at a rate significantly higher than that for similar providers nationally, while advanced-level learners, especially those aged 16 to 18, achieve their qualifications in line with the national rate. In a minority of instances, small variations exist between the performances of learners in different subject areas.
- Apprentices make satisfactory progress with the achievement of their frameworks. However, the college has only recently received its own contract for this area of learning and it is too soon to judge the full effectiveness of this provision.
- While the vast majority of learners achieve their qualifications, not all make the progress of which they are capable and achieve high grades. The vast majority develop excellent practical and employability skills and they make good progress in practical lessons. However, those at advanced level do not always make sufficient progress in theory lessons.
- Senior managers and tutors have worked effectively since the last inspection to ensure no differences exist between achievements of different groups of learners, including those from the low numbers from minority ethnic groups. Men perform slightly better than women.
- Learners who take qualifications in Functional Skills for English and mathematics achieve their qualifications significantly above the national rate. Learners make good progress in the development of English and mathematics skills in their vocational lessons. For example, in photography lessons, learners practice calculations relating to shutter speeds and aperture settings with zoom lenses. As part of the new study programme, learners who have not

achieved a GCSE in English or mathematics now have the opportunity to re-take these qualifications. However, it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this programme.

- Learners in most subject areas successfully undertake additional qualifications to develop further their practical skills and improve their employment prospects. For example, horticulture learners undertake tractor driving and pesticide application courses and sport learners undertake coaching and national governing body awards.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills at college. In lessons, they are well behaved, show respect for their tutors, each other and their environment. Attendance is high and the vast majority of learners are punctual. Most successfully undertake work experience with local employers or work on the college estate. Learners in a few subject areas undertake projects in the local community as part of their course. For example, sport learners plan and provide coaching sessions in local primary schools.
- Tutors provide good support to learners to help most progress to further education, higher education or employment. Advanced-level learners have the opportunity to work alongside higher education students and to undertake a short higher-education module to prepare them for their next step. Learners effectively use the good links, which most subject areas have with local employers to move to suitable employment. However, data on the progression of learners after college are incomplete and managers and tutors are unclear about the destinations of too many of those completing courses each year.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the last inspection, teaching, learning and assessment have improved to good, which has significantly increased the proportion of learners successfully completing their courses and progressing to further study or employment. Tutors have high expectations of their learners and as a result, learners remain motivated, interested and develop confidence and self-worth. They take pride in their work, display good standards of behaviour and clearly enjoy working as a team.
- Teaching in practical lessons is particularly good and more effective than that in theory lessons. Tutors use their industrial and commercial experience very effectively to link learning to good industry practice and make good use of the extensive specialist resources and college's estate to support learning. They encourage a strong work ethic and as a result, learners are able to work safely and collaboratively. Tutors effective demonstrations of skills and safe working practices ensure learners carry out tasks safely and accurately.
- Learners make good progress in developing their practical skills. For example, learners experiment with a range of media on visual arts courses and create professional floral displays on floristry courses. Those on horticulture courses construct slab paving work and, on countryside courses, learners produce greenwood products, to industry standards. Learners on animal care programmes, learn to protect and care for animals and on agriculture courses, they become proficient in handling expensive machinery and equipment independently.
- Checks on learning are frequent and effective in assessing learner's progress. Most learners receive constructive advice on how to improve their work helping them to learn how to work more independently. Tutors encourage peer assessment, which often leads to effective celebration of achievement and helps develop effective teamwork. However, on a few courses, tutors do not always return feedback on assignments early enough and comments are not sufficiently clear to help learners improve.
- In theory and in a few practical lessons, tutors do not systematically plan activities to ensure that all learners make the progress of which they are capable in the time available. In the less effective lessons, tutors give too few opportunities for learners to reflect and contribute ideas.

- Tutors’ use of ILT to support learning is variable. On agriculture courses, learners make good use of social networking sites and the virtual learning environment (VLE) to access helpful current agricultural resources and develop their knowledge of wider aspects of the land-based industries. However, although learners use smart phones effectively to record and assess their work, tutors do not take full advantage of the learning potential of interactive whiteboards or other electronic equipment in lessons. As a result, the use of technology in the classroom remains underdeveloped on many programmes and is too often restricted to electronic presentations or quizzes.
- Initial assessment is effective in placing learners on the most appropriate programmes and leads to early identification of additional support needs. Reviews of progress help learners reflect on their progress. However, the setting of individual targets with learners is not always effective and does not consistently inform planning of learning. As a result, the more able learners do not systematically access challenging further activities. On apprenticeships, reviews enable learners to make satisfactory progress and assessors support apprentices well, but most reviews fail to set specific and personalised targets for improvement. On many other courses, tutors and learners do not make full use of the new electronic tutorial system to set specific and measurable targets.
- Tutors develop learners' knowledge and skills in English and mathematics well and learners understand the importance of these skills to improve their employability. However, on many programmes tutors do not correct learners' spelling mistakes and poor grammar.
- Good support in and outside lessons helps learners complete courses successfully. Learners value the help they get from learning support assistants, technicians and their tutorial support. For example, tutors on sport programmes are particularly effective in setting targets and raising learners' confidence and expectations. Effective and timely information, advice and guidance help learners progress to further study or employment. Tutors provide effective help for those in need of personal or learning support, including dyslexia, mental and physical health, childcare, transport and residential costs.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well on most programmes. The induction week is comprehensive and ensures that learners understand what they have to do from start of their course. They can recognise bullying and harassment and what they need to do if they experience or witness these issues. Tutorials focus particularly well on the welfare of learners and this helps them develop confidence and self-worth. On a minority of programmes, learners do not have sufficient discussions and written work on diversity.

<p>Agriculture</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and consequently learners make good progress. Tutors use their good subject knowledge and recent industrial experience to provide interesting and relevant lessons. The proportion of advanced-level learners who achieve their qualification has increased consistently over the last three years and is now very high. Achievement of high grades on most courses is below the national rate, but tutors are now setting more challenging targets, which are increasing the attainment of high grades. Intermediate-level learners achieve their qualifications in line with the national rate.
- In the best lessons, tutors make frequent checks on learning, plan a variety of interesting tasks and maintain a brisk pace. Tutors are effective in encouraging the use of ILT, which learners use well in interesting and innovative ways. For example, they use smart phones collaboratively to record practical experiences and upload them to the VLE and the course social network page.

Learners are alert, polite and interested in what they are learning. Tutor's expectations of individual learners' performance are high and they challenge learners to produce work that is at a higher level than their initial assessment indicates. Attendance is good and punctuality is excellent.

- Tutors' management of health and safety in lessons is good. For example, machinery tutors have designed a series of hand signals for use when learners are in a tractor cab. Learners know these signals and respond well. Tutors have a good knowledge of learners' strengths and areas for improvement. They plan work experience well and additional qualifications effectively improve learners' employability skills. Tutors adapt the curriculum to meet the skills needs of local employers. For example, course managers reintroduced a combinable crop module at their request.
- Tutors agree challenging target grades with learners, clearly referenced to their GCSE grades, initial assessment results and progress in the first three weeks of the course. Learners are very well aware of their target grade and understand what they need to do to achieve it. In tutorials, tutors use their knowledge of learners' progress to inform them about what they must do to improve. Learners needing help benefit from effective additional support. Cooperation between course the tutors and learning support staff is good. However, tutors do not use the electronic tutorial system effectively to record grades from all module tutors. Records of marks and targets are often too old to be effective or informative to other tutors, learners or parents.
- Learners produce work that is appropriate for the level of course and tasks set in assignments are challenging and relevant. Tutors' marking of assignments is accurate and fair, but the feedback they provide is often ambiguous and too many assignments contain significant, uncorrected English errors. Learners have an over reliance on computers to check spelling and a result, words such as license and licence are mixed up.
- In the best lessons, tutors incorporate relevant mathematics, such as calculating seed rates or pesticide application rates. Tutors help develop learner's English skills by routinely incorporating curriculum vitae (CV) and letter writing as part of the work experience unit and speaking and listening features in most theory lessons. Tutors use and integrate ICT functional skills very well in most lessons, including the use of email and electronically produced and uploaded documents.
- Learners receive good careers advice and guidance. Tutors use their expertise and industry contacts to organise careers fairs, visiting speakers, mock interviews and study tours, which help learners choose and progress to an appropriate career. Timeliness and helpfulness of guidance for applications to higher education are good. Learners' progression is good and all leavers go onto another further education course, enter higher education or employment.
- Learners' behaviour is good. They feel safe and consider they can take part in all activities. Tutors frequently check learners' welfare and that they are taking part in college life. Tutors explore diversity effectively in lessons and tutorials. For example, during a planning meeting for a "Help for Heroes" fund raising event, the tutor led a sensitive discussion about approaching random members of the public for donations. In another example, use was made of naturally occurring opportunity to discuss how a hard-of-hearing learner views the course.

Animal care and veterinary science

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are now good which reflects the recent improvements in learners' achievements over the last three years. The proportion of full-time learners on intermediate-level courses who achieve their qualification is high, but those on advanced-level courses achieve at the national rate. However, the proportion of learners achieving high grades is low. Senior managers have reviewed the organisation of the advanced-level programmes and their actions have reduced the proportion of learners who leave the course early.
- Tutors are highly motivated and, they use their relevant qualifications and sound industrial experience to provide good teaching and learning. Tutors know the individual learning needs of learners and adapt their teaching to ensure that learners can make good progress.
- The best lessons are imaginative and challenge learners. In a science lesson, learners working in groups reinforced learning well by creating a model of an eye or ear, which they then explained to the rest of the group. Tutors clearly identify objectives for learners and they plan and have available extension activities to challenge the more able. They encourage learners to evaluate their own progress and set personal targets, but for a minority the targets lack sufficient challenge.
- Theory teaching at intermediate level is good and consequently learners make good progress, preparing them well for higher-level courses. Teaching and learning on dog grooming courses are good and learners quickly develop industry level skills to prepare them well for employment. Learners on veterinary nursing programmes make good progress.
- Teaching of theory lessons at advanced level lacks sufficient stretch and challenge for the majority of learners, with insufficient focus on learning. In these lessons, the learning activities do not fully develop learners' knowledge and understanding. As a result, not all learners make good progress in these lessons.
- Teaching of practical subjects is good. Learners work well to develop their skills. Tutors use demonstration and questioning particularly effectively to reinforce knowledge and understanding. Learners on routine animal husbandry duties and in practical classes make good use of resources to develop their vocational skills. However, in a minority of lessons the high number of learners restricts access to animals, limiting the development of learners' handling skills. Learners take part in planned work experience with a wide range of placements, increasing their employability and further developing their practical skills.
- In the majority of lessons, tutors effectively use video links, smart phones, the internet and other software applications to improve learning for most learners. However, in a minority of lessons tutors' use of ILT is underdeveloped.
- Initial assessment is thorough and ensures learners are on the right course. Tutors review learners' progress within the first six weeks and identify those struggling with course requirements. Tutors encourage these learners to transfer to a more suitable course. Identification of additional learning needs is good. Tutors quickly develop support plans and the learning support they provide enables learners to make good progress.
- Learners receive the support needed to make good progress on their course. They value the good personal and academic guidance they receive. However, for a minority of learners tutors do not review their progress, set targets and establish action to achieve their full potential sufficiently.

- Learners produce good written work that meets course requirements. They complete a varied range of assignments. Tutors’ feedback is clear, but it does not always give sufficient guidance on how learners can improve. Learners on too many programmes wait too long for work to be marked, limiting their use of feedback to prepare effectively for their next assignments.
- Learners develop good English and mathematics skills. Tutors are effective at encouraging learners to develop these skills and they integrate them into lessons through relevant and useful activities. For example, in a lesson on animal reproduction, learners worked in groups to calculate the breeding rate of rats over time. However, in a small minority of lessons, tutors miss opportunities to develop mathematical skills.
- Learners enjoy their studies, behave well and show respect for each other. Their attendance and punctuality are good. Tutors promote understanding of diversity well in a minority of lessons, but they miss too many opportunities to develop learners’ understanding of diverse attitudes to animals.

Visual arts	
16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the very high proportion of learners who successfully complete their courses and achieve their personal learning goals. Very good teaching and learning methods encourage learners to develop and acquire very good creative and technical skills.
- Tutors devise innovative projects that challenge learners, who then apply new knowledge and ideas to enhance creative projects in the visual arts. The college’s estate and landscape inspire learners’ projects to produce inventive work with natural materials. In an outstanding sculpture lesson, learners develop detailed knowledge about three-dimensional techniques.
- Learners work proficiently and accurately with materials and technology, refining specialist skills they apply to art, design and photographic work. Learners use specific art terminology fluently and build confidence in self-expression, completing strong compositions and detailed designs. In a particularly good photography lesson, learners practiced image enhancement techniques, adjusting hue and saturation using specialist software confidently.
- High expectations and consistently good support promote successful independent learning. In one very good lesson, learners worked diligently to create their own computer art characters and backgrounds. Open studio arrangements support learners with additional access to accommodation and equipment in order to complete work. Learners frequently broaden their knowledge through learning partnerships with post-graduate learners in screen-printing, drawing and architecture.
- Planning for learning is good, using targets negotiated with and determined by learners. However, these targets, recorded in group profiles, do not consistently translate into targeted strategies to meet individual learning needs in practical sessions. In a minority of lessons, tutors do not record feedback to provide learners with a precise summary of their short-term targets.
- Learners work well together, accelerating their progress and developing their collaborative skills. In an art and design lessons, learners performed as facilitators, encouraging and reinforcing analytical skills.
- Specialist tutors use their expertise well to plan stimulating teaching and learning, for example arranging temporary art installations and workshops with storytellers and presentations on photographic styles. Tutors strong emphasis on learners developing thorough analytical skills to interpret and describe artists’ work improves their written work well.

- Safe, well-presented accommodation supports learning and access to cross-college resources helps learners to realise creative aspirations. Learners appreciate having their own dedicated building and the identity it lends to the arts courses. Tutors celebrate learners’ achievements through displays of high quality attractive work in public spaces.
- Tutors’ and learners’ use of the VLE are variable and materials available do not accurately reflect current course content or the full range of subjects. However, learners make good use of specialist software and smart mobile technologies for project research and creation.
- Learners in photography have good opportunities to work on commissions within the college, experiencing contact with clients. They designed a series of posters on bullying, celebrating difference and safeguarding for the college’s learner support services. Visits to print studios, exhibitions and art fairs enrich learning. However, learners do not benefit from regular work experience or contact with employers in the arts. Progress in developing learning opportunities with creative employers is too slow and managers and staff have few current initiatives with industry contacts.
- Learners produce good quality written, creative and technical work. They benefit from specialist feedback in classrooms on their progress that helps them to improve and from good peer assessment that supports the evaluation of progress. Tutors mark written work carefully and they provide useful feedback on content, grammar and structure to help learners improve.
- Learners benefit from plentiful opportunities to practise and develop confidence in using good spoken and written English through presentations, group discussions and a variety of thoughtful written tasks. In one excellent lesson, a learner produced a vibrant and absorbing talk on rock band photography. Tutors promote good development of functional mathematics, for example, studying Fibonacci sequences in nature, proportions and angles in art and calculations that enhance learning in interior design and photography.
- Relevant course information, open days, studio tours and meetings with tutors provide learners with good advice and guidance about art and design programmes. Very productive links with the college’s higher education courses supports learners’ high rates of progression to higher education.
- In tutorials, tutors focus on the learner’s goals and learners understand what they need to do to improve their work and to achieve their aspirations. However, tutors provide insufficient information relating to other relevant learning organisations external to the college.
- Learners with differing abilities participate well in lessons and with plentiful peer support they develop knowledge collaboratively. Learners develop good creative exploration and promotion of diversity in their work. For example, learners produced a sculpture exploring body image and media portrayal and in another example, they challenged views and exchanged ideas on the ethics of photographic manipulation. Tutors consider culturally diverse materials to support learners’ awareness of wide-ranging stimuli and contexts that impact on producing art.

<p>Independent living and leisure skills</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment on foundation level land-based courses are good. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications is high. They develop good vocational skills in lessons and progress well to intermediate-level courses or employment. In a horse care lesson, learners gained a good understanding of the use of correct grooming equipment and were able to sequence the grooming activities by putting the posters they had made in the correct order. Teaching and individual support is very effective in enabling learners to improve their personal and social skills.

- Learners produce high standards of work. Tutors use photographs as evidence to show learners' good progress in lessons, for example, coppicing willow trees in horticulture. Tutors provide comprehensive feedback to learners and consequently they know what they need to do to improve. However, a small minority of tutors do not always correct learner's spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Practical teaching is good. Tutors make lessons interesting and fun using a wide range of activities that challenge all learners. Good questioning further develops and reinforces learners' skills and knowledge well. In a horse-riding lesson, learners were quickly able to develop confidence to ride without stirrups, moving from walking onto trotting and canter paces as they grew in confidence. The majority of learners also attend work experience in local companies, further developing their personal and employability skills.
- Theory teaching prepares learners well for practical activities. Tutors reinforce learners' understanding of health and safety in all lessons. In an animal care lesson, learners gained a good understanding on the importance of vaccination, hygiene and correct contact procedures with animals to minimise risk of tetanus. Learners feel safe and enjoy their learning. In a small minority of less successful lessons, tutors do not sufficiently challenge the more able and they wait significant periods of time while other learners complete the activity, limiting their learning and progress.
- Tutors develop learner's English and mathematics skills appropriately in lessons. Tutors effectively identify opportunities that occur during vocational lessons to improve learner's skills. For example, the use of volume calculations to accurately work out the amount of water in a fish tank.
- Group tutorials are good. Tutors provide effective lessons in employability, personal and social development. Individual tutorials significantly improve learners' confidence enabling them to participate more effectively in lessons, such as having the confidence to ask for help and answer questions. However, tutors do not always use individual learning plans well to plan for the development of these skills to increase the number of learners progressing to a higher-level course and/or apprenticeships.
- Personal support for learners is very effective. Learning support tutors are skilful in supporting learners both individually and in the classroom. Good practical support, including bursaries, has helped relieve financial burdens on learners and enabled them to purchase hand tools. Support staff including signers and scribes, work effectively with small groups and individual learners in lessons keeping them on target with their learning and providing necessary support to enable them to participate. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners. Initial assessment is comprehensive. It includes a written application, interview and thorough assessment process ensuring learners are attending the most appropriate programme for their ability and future employment goals.
- Tutors incorporate equality and diversity themes into tutorials lessons well. Religious festivals, Black history month and other themes develop learner's understanding well. Learners are able to recognise bullying and harassment and who to report it to.

Foundation English**16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners' achievement in foundation English is very good, with the proportion who achieve qualifications consistently above national rate for the past three years. Learners make good progress in lessons, produce high-standard written work, develop good English skills and gain qualifications relevant to their vocation and career aspiration. Attendance, retention and punctuality are good.
- Enthusiastic tutors encourage and support learners to achieve their personal and career aspirations. Learners speak highly of their tutors and enjoy being at college. They are respectful of their tutors and their peers and their behaviour is very good. Learners feel safe at the college.
- Tutors effectively deploy a good range of learning strategies, such as ordering cards to assist with an event-planning task to help learners make progress. In the best lessons, eye-catching visual media presentations creatively capture learners' interest in topics, including a challenging fast-paced quiz on the use of language in advertising. In another lesson, a tutor used humorous phrases well to explore correct use of punctuation. However, access to a broader range of English learning resources via the VLE is more limited, and tutors have not fully developed their use of ILT during lessons to improve learning.
- Tutors initially assess learners' English skills well at the start of their programmes, including diagnosing specific gaps in knowledge, producing comprehensive individual learning plans. Tutors regularly review learners' development targets and highlight specific areas such as appropriate use of commas in assignment writing. However, the links between targets set for English to vocational progress reviews are inconsistent.
- Tutors promptly recognise learners' additional support needs and access to specialist support for areas such as dyslexia is good. Examples include the use of tinted spectacles to improve readability and coloured paper for hand writing assessments. Tutors provide good one to one support, in lessons or during one to one assignment writing sessions, creating an environment which allows learners to raise pastoral as well as academic concerns with confidence.
- Assessment practice within English functional skills and GCSE is good. Learners receive prompt and detailed feedback on their written work. Tutors consistently correct grammar and spelling mistakes and ways to improve exam grades are given. Tutors embed English well into vocational assessments with written feedback highlighting punctuation and spelling improvements needed. Learners are encouraged to use additional electronic support materials by scanning digital codes in via their smart phones.
- Tutors' reinforcement and recognition of opportunities to embed mathematics within lessons is underdeveloped. Tutors do not maximise learning to take account of naturally occurring opportunities for mathematics development, such as percentages of participants when planning a company event. Planning often excludes any specific detail on how tutors will cover mathematics in lessons. Very occasionally, the reinforcement of correct spellings is not sufficiently effective.
- Learners receive good initial advice and guidance, which ensures they are on the correct level of course for their English qualification to match their career aspiration and previous level of achievement. Tutors ensure learners are fully aware of assessment and exam requirements and how they can gain higher grades at GCSE level. However, opportunities for learners to improve their GCSE English grade above C are currently more limited.
- Tutors plan inclusive learning, sensitively considering the abilities and learning needs of mixed gender groups and preferred learning styles. In better lessons, the media imagery used reflects

a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Learning resources cover a satisfactory breadth of world affairs and diversity within the population, although the promotion of diversity is not consistent in lessons.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have overseen three years of dramatic improvements in learners' achievements in almost all subject areas. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualification is now high, or very high, on most courses. The Principal and the senior management team have worked very successfully to inspire staff confidence and raise their aspirations through a consultative and supportive approach to leadership. The pace of change is rapid, but well managed through regular management meetings, which have significantly improved the quality of provision. However, inspectors agreed with managers that they need to further refine the monitoring of target-setting for learners so that they can be confident that all learners make the progress, and achieve the grades, of which they are capable.
- The Principal has strived successfully to raise the profile of the further education division in the college and to celebrate learners' successes on further education courses more visibly to the wider college community and to external stakeholders. Significant capital investment has improved the facilities and resources in most, but not all, areas of the college.
- The college's discrete governing body for further education has made a significant contribution to ensuring more consistent and sustainable performance across the college, while at the same time recognising that this remains a challenge in a small number of subject areas. Governors receive detailed, but concise reports on learners' outcomes and standards of teaching and learning. As a result, they have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement overall, although they are less knowledgeable about the performance of different subject areas. They challenge underperformance well and have made useful suggestions to assist in the rigour of their own monitoring, including the introduction of a mid-year self-assessment report.
- Governors have a very appropriate range of skills with particular expertise in further education and subject areas such as mathematics and horticulture. They receive the necessary training to carry out their roles very effectively. However, the college has recognised the need to have a learner representative on the governors' further education committee. Governors are particularly proactive in the ways in which they interact successfully with learners and are fully immersed in the life of the college taking part, for example, in shadowing lesson observations, giving careers talks and providing staff development.
- The management focus on improving teaching and learning has been well-planned, relentless and supportive and has had a positive impact on the quality of lessons in most areas of the college. Weekly teaching, learning and assessment meetings focus in detail on how to improve lessons and use a good range of data to risk assess tutors' performance in the classroom. Lesson observers are highly experienced and are expert tutors in their subject areas. However, findings from a minority of lesson observations are insufficiently evaluative in their judgements about learning and learners' progress. The college has very little inadequate teaching and learning, but not enough lessons are outstanding. A minority of lessons and some teaching practice is too variable. Teaching and learning champions support individual tutors to improve their teaching practice particularly effectively. The arrangements to check the quality of all aspects of work-based learners' courses are underdeveloped.
- Managers have thought very carefully about how best to integrate and now make good use of feedback on tutors' classroom practice for performance management and staff development. They have devised an innovative and particularly useful grid to help them analyse the strengths and training needs of tutors. This helps them to determine which tutors they should make a

priority for observation each week. The human resources team and managers work very effectively in partnership to identify tutors' individual training needs arising from appraisals and lesson observations. Appraisal for tutors is rigorous and draws well on the findings of performance in lessons and on learners' outcomes. Staff comment very positively about the comprehensive and well-attended range of staff development, which has improved classroom practice.

- Self-assessment is good. The college's overall self-assessment report and the subject area reports are accurate, concise, clear and evaluative with a strong focus on teaching, learning and assessment. Managers carry out a number of other regular and very useful checks on the performance of its faculties and individual subject areas. Although updates of quality improvement plans for subject areas evaluate clearly the impact of activities to improve learners' experiences, the overall college plan focuses too much on actions taken and completed and not enough on their effect on the quality of provision. Managers listen carefully to, and act promptly upon, feedback from learners' representatives and the students' union to bring about improvements to the provision.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Managers have responded positively to the introduction of study programmes. All learners now have the opportunity to study for an appropriate English or mathematics qualification and most benefit from external work placement opportunities, often supplemented by realistic work-related activities on college sites. The content of courses in a number of subject areas has changed to reflect local and regional demands and trends in land-based and associated industries more generally. Courses in sport and visual arts make good use of the college's estate as a resource and theme for projects and other activities.
- The college's equality and diversity steering group has refocused its activities to ensure it monitors closely those aspects of equality and diversity that have most impact on learners. The combination of a clear focus on the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons by lesson observers and good staff development has led to tutors being more confident in discussing these topics with learners. Managers have had some success in recruiting more male and female learners to subject areas that are traditionally dominated by men or women.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Managers and governors receive detailed reports about the small number of safeguarding incidents that occur in the college and how staff have dealt with them. The college has clear procedures to monitor closely the progress and achievement of learners at risk and/or those with declared learning difficulties and disabilities that constitute a significant proportion of the learner cohort. All staff, including governors, have received appropriate safeguarding training, incorporating very targeted professional development on aspects of personal safety that are particularly pertinent to young people in education and training settings.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Writtle College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Agriculture	2
Animal Care and Veterinary Science	2
Visual Arts	2
Independent living and leisure skills	2
Foundation English	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Higher education institution							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 698							
	Part-time: 347							
Principal/CEO	Stephen Waite							
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2011							
Website address	www.writtle.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	47	0	121	10	459	61	N/A	N/A
Part-time	18	38	42	178	13	58	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+		
	36	22	11	19	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	84							
Full-time	0							
Part-time	84							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A 							

Contextual information

Writtle College, which appointed a new Principal in April 2013, is a higher education institution offering further education courses in land-based subjects, visual arts and sport, located just outside the city of Chelmsford. The campus is based around a large estate, comprising a range of land-based commercial units and landscaped grounds. Approximately two-thirds of further education learners are aged between 16 and 18. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is the same as that in the local area. The proportion of the local population who hold no qualification is lower than the national average and about three quarters have achieved intermediate level qualifications. Rates of unemployment in the local area are lower than the rate nationally and the proportion of pupils who leave school with five GCSEs at A*-C grades is around the national average. Although the college is located in a relatively prosperous part of the country, some local areas, including more rural communities, have areas of high deprivation.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Pemble HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy head of further education 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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