

City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

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

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Many students taking academic subjects do not make the progress expected of them, given their attainment on entry to the college, and their achievement of high grades is low. Success rates on intermediate level courses are very low.
- Many lessons require improvement because they do not challenge and inspire students to higher standards. The promotion of relevant equality and diversity issues is lacking in many lessons.
- The quality of feedback on students' assignments is often weak. Teachers' comments are unclear and do not help students to improve their future work sufficiently.
- The implementation of the pastoral system varies. The process is confusing to students and is not fully developed in all parts of the college.
- Quality assurance systems do not ensure effective practices across college. The good improvements in teaching, learning and assessment and in outcomes for students in certain areas are not replicated in others.
- College-wide target-setting is underdeveloped, is not aligned to college aims and is insufficiently specific to be measured. The effective implementation of targets is inconsistent.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Success rates on advanced-level vocational courses have risen significantly and are high and many students on these courses obtain high grades.
- Students' behaviour and attitude are exemplary. They show considerable respect and support for each other in an ethos that is inclusive, safe, welcoming and conducive to learning.
- Many students benefit from high levels of academic and additional learning support which aid their learning.
- Teachers in many lessons develop students' English skills very effectively, especially when using subject-specific terms.
- The college benefits from a wide range of partnerships that share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Agree clear, specific and measurable targets in self-assessment and in performance management systems for individual accountability. Ensure that college-wide targets complement, and are aligned with, the key college mission, aims and objectives. Monitor their consistent implementation in all areas of the college rigorously.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning by ensuring that planning for learning focuses on individual needs and is implemented in lessons. Encourage teachers to provide a wide range of active learning opportunities that interest and engage students of all abilities. Share best practice within the college to help all teachers develop highly effective questioning techniques to check on and extend students' learning.
- Increase teachers' expectations of their students so that they challenge students during lessons and through assignments to achieve at higher levels. Encourage students to make better progress in their learning and to attain higher grades than expected, based on their starting points.
- Introduce more effective quality assurance systems that prioritise improving teaching, learning and assessment throughout the college, but especially in the areas where students make poor progress. Ensure that managers at all levels monitor the implementation of the many new initiatives introduced to obtain a consistently positive impact across college.
- Monitor rigorously the quality of feedback on students' assessed written work. Improve the standard and expectations of teachers' comments to ensure that all students receive clear, specific and legible feedback that encourages them to improve their work.
- Strengthen and clarify the role of the achievement coaches. Ensure that all students have access to this support at least once a term. Articulate the purpose and advantages of this system so that all students are aware of it, can readily access it and know how best to use it.
- Reinforce the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons by identifying and monitoring this closely during lesson observations and learning walks. Provide clear examples for staff that enable them to learn from the good practice that exists.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Long course success rates increased significantly in 2011/12, but decreased slightly in 2012/13 to about average. Success rates at advanced level have risen over the last three years, because of significant increases in vocational course rates. Success rates in AS and GCE A-level subjects, however, decreased last year for students aged 16 to 18 and are below average. The success rates on intermediate-level courses decreased significantly in 2012/13 and are very low.
- Many students aged 16 to 18 enrol with relatively low GCSE grades. The proportion gaining high grades on vocational courses, however, is high. Few students taking AS and GCE A-level subjects obtain high grade passes. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE English is very high, but in most GCSE subjects it is low and is especially so in mathematics.
- Many students do not make the progress expected of them, given their prior attainment. Students on AS computing, critical thinking, English literature, French, German, government and politics, music, physical education, design and technology product design and on BTEC art and design, and creative media (television) courses achieve better than expected, but students taking many other subjects and qualifications do not.
- During the last three years, staff have been successful in reducing the differences in outcomes for male and female students aged 16 to 18, but female students' success rates are below

average. Adult male students underachieve compared with adult female students. The great majority of students from different minority ethnic backgrounds succeed at least as well as those from a White British background, except for the few students from White and Black African cultures. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were very successful in 2011/12, but were less successful than other students in 2012/13.

- The standard of students' work is good in most of the areas inspected and students take considerable pride and care in producing it. They develop good personal and social skills, often enhanced by good group work in lessons and also by being student and sport ambassadors. The development of their employability skills is less effective. Many students do not benefit from work experience and the links between theory and practice are not used to best effect in many lessons.
- The proportion of students who progress from AS to GCE A-level subjects has increased over three years and is high. The proportion progressing from intermediate to advanced-level vocational courses has also increased and is average. The great majority of students leave the college to enter higher or further education, apprenticeships or employment. The destinations of very few students are unknown.
- Attendance is average, but is below the college target. Most students arrive on time for their lessons. Their behaviour and attitude are exemplary, especially at advanced level, and they support and respect each other in lessons.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment reflects the outcomes for students which require improvement. The quality of lessons varies considerably across subject areas. The best lessons motivate and enable students to make good progress, whereas the lessons that lack challenge or inspiration contribute to the poor progress that many students make. Although teaching and learning are good in English and sport, leisure and recreation, a high proportion of lessons in other areas require improvement.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan and implement a wide range of activities that meet students' individual needs well. These enable students to develop a wide range of skills, including literacy and numeracy. Teachers have high expectations of what their students might achieve. They are very skilled in using probing questioning to challenge students to develop and explain their responses to a higher standard. Teachers and students make good use of information and learning technology (ILT) to widen students' knowledge and increase their understanding. In a philosophy lesson, the teacher provided excellent opportunities that enabled students to debate and share ideas with their peers while using the interactive board very effectively.
- In the less effective lessons, learning is not planned sufficiently to meet individual students' needs. The pace of these lessons is often slow, learning objectives are not demanding and teachers' questioning skills do not demand much of students. The use of ILT does not involve students and does not inspire or engage them. While the college successfully promotes a culture of respect for others in lessons, the active promotion of wider equality and diversity issues in lessons and through assessment is underdeveloped.
- In most lessons, students have good opportunities to develop their English skills and extend their understanding of the subject-specific terminology required in their course. The opportunities for students to develop their mathematical skills, however, are less effective and they vary across areas.
- Teachers are well qualified and resources to support learning are good. The learning resource centres are equipped comprehensively and students value and make good use of the centres to develop their learning and complete assignments. The virtual learning environment provides a wide range of resources to support independent learning.
- Although assessment processes have been strengthened this year, their quality varies significantly. In the best examples, teachers mark work carefully and provide clear and

constructive feedback that aids students' improvement. In the less effective cases, the detail and usefulness of the feedback to help students improve require improvement.

- Support for students is good. Teachers provide good subject-specific support on most courses which is strengthened by additional workshops, booster sessions, peer mentoring and accelerated learning coaches in specific subjects. The learning resource centre team works closely with teachers to provide appropriate additional learning support for a range of needs including health issues, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum condition, counselling and behaviour.
- Students have good access to impartial information, advice and guidance at all stages in their college experience from on-site careers advisers. In the autumn term, the role of the achievement coaches changed to focus on students identified as not making sufficient progress. The role is not sufficiently clear to many students and their access to these coaches varies. Formal individual meetings do not take place frequently for many students.
- Staff use the electronic individual learning plan well to record and monitor students' progress towards achieving their target grades. Most students are aware of the progress they are making and what they need to do to reach their targets.

Health, social care and public services

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and this correlates with the outcomes for students which also require improvement. Success rates in health and social care decreased last year and are average, whereas those in public services increased over three years and are about average. All teachers are ambitious for the success of their students and plan lessons thoroughly to meet students' needs and interests. Many teachers, however, do not implement these plans thoroughly.
- In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of interesting activities that ensure students enjoy their learning. Teachers check that students understand how to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations. For example, public service students compare the effectiveness of autocratic and democratic leadership styles in combat scenarios. Health and social care students study demographic and epidemiological surveys to establish health and well-being trends in the city.
- In the less effective lessons, the pace of teaching is often too slow. Teachers do not ensure that students make sufficient progress. They do not question students effectively enough to check that learning is taking place. A few students lose concentration, are not fully involved in learning and occasionally disrupt others' learning. Teachers do not challenge students to aspire to higher standards. The range of teaching methods is narrow and is not related to work settings. Attendance is low and punctuality is poor.
- Initial assessment is thorough and is used well to gather essential background information and to set personal targets, such as to check spelling in written work and to put more effort into participating in group discussions. Teachers provide good feedback which ensures that students have a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve their work.
- Teachers support students well. They have a good understanding of the needs and interests of each student. Teachers provide good advice and information to help students make important decisions about their next steps in learning and employment. Students benefit from the good links that exist with local universities.
- Teachers use role play effectively to help public services students practise skills in aviation security such as searching passengers. In health and social care, however, teachers recognise that more needs to be done to help students develop their employability skills such as self-confidence and assertiveness. Work experience placements with local health and social care

employers provide valuable opportunities, but teachers do not monitor the placements thoroughly enough to support and recognise students' progress.

- In the best lessons, teachers use well-crafted activities to help students improve their use of English and mathematics, such as reading case studies aloud and calculating averages to establish population trends. Most teachers, however, do not integrate the use of mathematics and English in their lessons despite there being suitable opportunities to do so.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in most lessons. They use a wide range of methods and materials to foster good relations and ensure the consideration of individual needs. Health and social care students have a good understanding of the importance of dignity and independence when providing care for older people. A few teachers, however, do not identify and adequately challenge students' negative stereotyping and inappropriate comments.

Mathematics and statistics

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, whereas outcomes for students were inadequate in 2012/13. Success rates and student progress compared with attainment on entry to the college were poor in AS mathematics, GCE A-level mathematics and GCSE mathematics. Retention rates are generally above average. Attendance is high in GCE A-level mathematics lessons, but is low in many GCSE mathematics and functional mathematics classes. During the last year, staff have strengthened assessment and support systems in mathematics successfully and have also addressed some key aspects of underperformance well. Current in-year performance data show that these interventions are having a positive impact on students' progress when compared with the same time last year.
- Most lessons require improvement, but there is a minority of good and outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and have good information technology skills. The quality of planning and delivery, however, is very variable. In many lessons, the pace is too slow, learning objectives are not sufficiently demanding and students do not make the progress expected of them, given their prior attainment. Their previously acquired skills are not being sufficiently well retained and revised in many lessons.
- Assessment methods have been strengthened this year on all mathematics courses. An appropriate amount of homework is set and assessed on a regular basis on all courses. Tests now take place on a more frequent basis and the greater use of past examination questions ensures that the students receive more frequent and realistic feedback on their progress.
- Learner satisfaction is high in this curriculum area; most mathematics students speak very positively about the quality of teaching and the quality, availability and usefulness of feedback and subject-specific support. The emphasis, both within lessons and via feedback on marked work, and on the correct use and spelling of technical terminology is good.
- In-class questioning requires improvement. The current methods do not facilitate whole-class participation and consequently, teachers are unable to gauge the different levels of students' learning and understanding.
- In the best lessons, students work very well both individually and in pairs or groups and make very good progress with appropriately demanding and differentiated work. In the less effective lessons, however, pair and group work activities lack structure and the quality and quantity of students' understanding and learning are insufficient.
- Subject-specific support is good on all mathematics courses. This has been strengthened by the recent introduction of additional drop-in workshops and the deployment of peer mentors and

accelerated learning coaches. A minority of students' work is of a very high standard, but a high proportion of students' files are disorganised and too much work is poorly presented.

- In all mathematics courses, diverse groups of learners work well together and value each others' contributions. The ethos of respect that pervades the college is excellent. Teachers are good at selecting and creating contemporary activities that appeal to the interests of all learners, whatever their background or culture. For example, customer satisfaction ratings for mobile phones were effectively used as a basis for an activity on statistical averages in a GCSE mathematics lesson.

Sport, leisure and recreation

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment ensure most students achieve their qualifications as shown by the above average success rates on most sport and physical education courses. A minority of students on the advanced subsidiary diploma in sport development and coaching course, however, are less successful. Students enjoy lessons and learn well because of good teaching and supportive relationships with staff. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good but attendance is low.
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers plan and manage most lessons well, ensuring students' engagement through a variety of interesting activities that challenge students and extend their learning. They use probing questions effectively to develop students' knowledge and understanding and many students achieve better than expected. Most students are enthusiastic and most respond well to their highly motivated and inspiring teachers.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge students to attain higher standards and the pace is slow. They do not check learning effectively and the more confident students dominate discussions.
- Individual targets set for many students in lessons and with achievement coaches are insufficiently challenging or specific in promoting improvement and progress. This is particularly the case for those on sports development and coaching courses. Consequently, many students do not make the progress expected of them.
- Teachers develop high-quality resources in the virtual learning environment to support students' assignment work and promote their independent learning. They use ILT and off-site specialist facilities at a local leisure centre very effectively to enhance learning.
- The monitoring of students' progress has improved and is good. Students are motivated to improve their personal performance through the use of league tables; they strive to gain promotion to a higher league through improved progress, punctuality, attendance and by attaining higher grades. Students are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own progress and maximising their potential.
- Teachers use assessment results productively to keep students informed about progress towards their learning goals. Teachers' written feedback is highly effective in identifying how students can improve their work to achieve higher grades. When students are not achieving at their predicted grades they are sanctioned to attend additional sessions where individual actions are agreed to improve their assignment work.
- Teachers are particularly effective in supporting the development of students' English, especially the correct spelling of technical terminology. They correct grammar and spelling errors in marked work and give clear feedback to ensure students reduce the errors in their work. The development of mathematical skills, however, is insufficiently embedded in lessons and assignments.
- The development of students' work-related skills and opportunities for work experience are underdeveloped. Students are offered opportunities to gain additional skills in coaching but

places are insufficient for the number of students. All students gain leadership skills but are not always able to practise them in a working environment.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers introduce equality and diversity themes through activities that raise students' awareness of sport for those with disabilities. Naturally occurring opportunities to discuss equality and diversity aspects in lessons, however, are not used consistently well.

English

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching and learning are good and this is reflected in success rates which are at or above average in most subjects. The proportion of students gaining GCSE A* to C grades in English language has increased and is high. The proportion of students achieving high grades on advanced-level provision, however, is low. Progression from AS to GCE A-level subjects is high. Attendance is low.
- Students enjoy lessons and are well supported by teachers to make good progress. This is evidenced in their often sophisticated analysis of language and peer challenge in group work. The use of appropriate advanced-level terminology is promoted well. Lessons inherently develop students' English skills and offer effective opportunities for the development of oracy. The development of numeracy skills is insufficient.
- In most lessons, teachers plan thoroughly and identify appropriately demanding learning outcomes clearly. They take account of students' initial assessment outcomes, needs and abilities to plan groupings and activities which are effective in raising students' progress in lessons. Frequent, student-centred activities encourage high levels of engagement, teamwork, independence and, in the best lessons, higher-order thinking skills. For example, in one excellent GCE A-level language lesson, students who were developing terms for new species challenged each other as to whether what they were proposing constituted a semantic field shift.
- In the less effective lessons, the pace is too slow to sustain students' interest and planning is based on tasks rather than on learning, leading to loss of focus and limited progress by many students.
- Teachers make good use of directed and probing questioning to challenge students and most learning activities are appropriately demanding. Teachers use innovative techniques to enable students to assess their own progress and confidence at different points in the lesson. For example, students identify their level of understanding on a continuum at the beginning and end of a lesson.
- Students have good awareness of their target grades and formal assessment feedback makes reference to the student's performance against target grade. Where students develop their own plans to support improvement, however, actions are often too broad and progress against them is not routinely updated across the area.
- The quality and usefulness of feedback and the extent to which spelling, punctuation and grammar are corrected in assessed work are inconsistent. In the best examples, feedback is structured and detailed and promotes aspiration by setting out clear and constructive steps to improve grades. In the less helpful examples, feedback is annotated within the text, sometimes difficult to read and does not set out clearly what students should do to improve.
- Teachers work closely with learning resource centre staff to provide support for students in essay writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. This has a positive impact on students' progress and performance.

- Equality and diversity are promoted effectively in most lessons by the well-considered choice of student groupings based on ability or demographic factors. Teachers exploit opportunities to explore the role of equality and diversity in language and literature routinely.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The governors, Principal and the senior team are proud of their mission to serve their local community by meeting the requirements of its young people. They are determined to encourage aspiration and raise ambition in a welcoming college environment in which students are well motivated to succeed and progress.
- An experienced and talented team of governors takes a proactive and consultative role in determining an inclusive strategy to meet individual needs. They are well informed and offer support and effective challenge. Many take part in learning walks in order to understand the college more fully.
- The new learning pathways provide clear lines of progression for students. Managers are developing the curriculum and work experience to meet the needs of the 16–19 study programmes. The approach to local provision is collaborative and includes a good partnership with the nearby further education college to offer employability programmes and information to school leavers. Staff work innovatively and extensively with the local universities and a range of partner high schools to share good practice in teaching and learning.
- Managers have not been effective in making the rapid improvements needed in students' outcomes in half of the curriculum areas identified as needing support and intervention. Staff development is very responsive to need. The new organisational structure aids the focus on improvement and development strategies. It is too soon to say whether this will be effective in raising standards in all areas.
- The new performance management system has enabled managers to improve poorer performance in a minority of areas. Target-setting is not yet aligned to college aims in all areas and is insufficiently focused on full individual accountability. In the best cases, performance management includes specific targets for students' outcomes and improvements in teaching and learning. Lesson observations are consistently linked into the performance management process but do not always indicate exactly what teachers need to do to improve. While the findings of most lesson observations match inspectors' views, others focus too much on the teacher and teaching rather than on the students and learning.
- Quality assurance is not yet effective. The many new initiatives are not implemented consistently and this is reflected in the variable outcomes for students. However, there is a determined culture of improvement, led by the Principal, in which teaching, learning and assessment are the key priorities and which has been successful in sport, leisure and recreation and in English. This is evidenced by 'closing the loop', which is an innovative system of learning walks which helps to improve teaching and learning.
- The self-assessment process includes all staff. The self-assessment report is detailed and data are accurate but cross-college judgements overstate strengths and quality improvement plans are inconsistent. Improvement targets are not always sufficiently specific to be measurable. It is too soon to know whether the meetings between curriculum and senior managers to monitor progress will be effective in securing the required improvements in students' outcomes.
- Students' views are elicited very effectively from many sources, including the student parliament. Managers use them to make appropriate improvements such as the introduction of student planners, the student bulletin and a quiet study area.
- Managers promote equality and diversity satisfactorily at college level, but this varies at course level. Good practice in raising students' awareness of equality and diversity has increased, but is still an area for development. Managers track the performance of different groups of students assiduously and have reduced most of the achievement gaps.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of students. Students at different levels and from a variety of backgrounds feel safe. The learning environment provides

a respectful, pleasant, well-resourced, calm and ordered atmosphere in which learning can flourish. Managers have extended college opening hours into the evenings and at weekends to meet the needs of students who cannot study at home.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form 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	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3
Public services	3
Mathematics and statistics	3
Sport, leisure and recreation	2
English	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Sixth form college							
Age range of learners	16-18							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,538							
	Part-time: 9							
Principal/CEO	Mr Paul Mangnall							
Date of previous inspection	October 2012							
Website address	www.stokesfc.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	N/A	N/A	125	1	1,496	15	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	6	0	14	14	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+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	4							
Part-time	3							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Contextual information

The City of Stoke-On-Trent Sixth Form College is a medium-sized college. It relocated to a new building near to the city centre and railway station in August 2010 as part of the city's University Quarter regeneration scheme. The Science Centre, shared with the university, opened in September 2012. The college serves an area of considerable deprivation. The proportion of the local population without qualifications is higher than the national average and the proportion having intermediate qualifications or above is lower than that nationally. Unemployment is seven percentage points above the national average. The proportion of pupils aged 16 in Stoke-on-Trent who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in 2012, is significantly below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Shaun Dillon HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Director of 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 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 relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across much 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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