

Forster Community College Limited

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		4–7 February 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:

- Learners overcome their barriers to progression and develop good personal, social and employability skills. They enjoy their courses, attend regularly and make good progress relative to their starting points.
- Good teaching, training and assessment ensure that a large majority of learners complete their qualifications successfully. Learners, many of whom have very low starting points in the use of English and mathematics, develop good skills in using English and mathematics in their everyday lives.
- Well-qualified and experienced tutors plan sessions skilfully and enthusiastically to include a good range of practical activities that involve learners fully and help them to apply and extend their learning.
- Strong leadership, a well-informed board of governors and committed staff have developed a particularly responsive provision for learners, the overwhelming majority of whom have multiple barriers to education, training and employment.
- Forster Community College has a strong culture of inclusion, respect and opportunity for all learners. Dedicated managers, tutors and staff know their individual learners well and support them very effectively to overcome their barriers to participation and progress.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too few learners receive an outstanding quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The proportion of learners who progress to further training or employment requires improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve learners' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - tutors set for all learners, including learners on advanced courses, clear and achievable personal learning targets, and monitor and record their progress and achievements against their targets systematically
 - learners receive good quality advice and guidance on progression so that more learners progress to further training or employment after completing their courses.
- Increase the proportion of sessions which are outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all tutors have skills to integrate the development of learners' English and mathematics skills successfully in teaching, learning and assessment
 - tutors always provide written feedback which is detailed, and guides learners on how they can improve.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Learners, of whom almost all are at high risk of social and economic exclusion and have multiple substantial barriers to participate in learning, improve their personal, social and employability skills significantly. They enhance their capacity to take control of their lives and improve their life chances and that of their children and dependents.
- Learners enjoy attending the college and their sessions greatly. A strong feature of the college is the way learners have developed the right attitude to support each other, work well together, and recognise the life-changing progress that they are making.
- Since the last inspection, success rates of learners have improved. In 2012/13, success rates for learners on classroom-based short courses were high, and a good proportion of them on foundation-level courses completed successfully. A higher proportion of learners on long courses completed successfully compared to learners in similar providers. Success rates of learners on advanced-level courses were below national averages and required improvement.
- Success rates of learners on functional skills qualifications in English at foundation level were high. The small number of learners who studied for functional skills qualifications in mathematics achieved well.
- Based on the college's data, learners' retention, attendance and punctuality on most courses are good this year. Current learners, including apprentices, are making good progress from their starting points. The learners who take part in work experience, develop their employability skills particularly well, for example, they deal confidently with customers in restaurants and childcare settings.
- The large majority of learners, who have very low starting points in using English and mathematics, enhance their use of these subjects significantly. For example, learners on horticulture courses use their developed skills to write in their workbooks about care for a planted area or the steps for preparing ground for sowing or planting.
- There are no significant differences between the performances of groups of learners. Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity, and respect each other. They recognise that each individual faces a different set of life challenges and demonstrate a willingness to accept and support each other.
- More recently, the college has improved the system for collecting and recording learners' progression to employment or training and the number of learners who have progressed to

other courses or employment has increased. However, overall, the proportion of learners who progress to further courses or employment requires improvement.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good quality of teaching, learning and assessment has contributed well to the good learners' outcomes. Tutors' effective planning and the use of different teaching strategies has resulted in the good development of learners' skills in using English and mathematics in a range of vocational areas and in relation to their job-search activities.
- In the large majority of sessions, tutors plan skilfully and develop further learners' confidence and self-esteem by linking learning and assessment to the learners' life experience. This contributes well to their motivation as they recognise the relevance of their learning. For example, they engage in lively and energetic debate on stages of development for children.
- In the minority of less successful sessions, tutors do not set sufficiently clear and measurable learning objectives for learners; they do not plan sufficiently for good learning. This contributes to learners not recognising the progress that they make and becoming demotivated. In these sessions, tutors do not extend learners' knowledge sufficiently.
- Most tutors use their skills and vocational knowledge well to plan activities that enthuse learners; this contributes to learners enjoying their learning, and improvement in their attendance and punctuality. A good range of paper-based material helps learners to learn at their own pace. They use computers well to research different topics, for example, about differing cooking recipes. An increasing number of learners develop independent learning skills by using the learning material that is available on the college's virtual learning environment.
- Initial assessment, including the identification of learners' personal and social barriers to learning, is effective. Learners who wish to start on advanced health and social care programmes complete a written assignment identifying their prior knowledge and their writing skills. Most tutors use this information well to plan learners' training.
- Tutors are very sensitive to learners' anxieties about learning; they provide an appropriate level of feedback on learners' work that they consider does not de-motivate learners. For example, they intentionally do not identify and correct all the errors in learners' written work. Although some learners benefit from this strategy, it is not sufficiently effective for all learners. For example, sometimes learners repeat the same spelling and grammatical errors, or use words out of context.
- Teaching, learning and assessment of English are good. Most tutors use the information from initial assessment of learners' English skills to plan activities to develop their skills in reading, writing and in communicating. For example, during many sessions, learners have group discussions that help them to practise their speaking and listening skills and to gain the confidence to speak in front of others.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics is good. Tutors use a variety of teaching and learning activities, for example, real-life scenarios, quizzes and games, to make learning mathematics enjoyable and extend learners' skills and confidence in using mathematics. They use good questioning techniques to check learners' understanding of topics, for example, how they have arrived at specific answers. In catering sessions, tutors routinely use tasks such as checking temperatures, weighing and measuring ingredients to make mathematics relevant to learners.
- Advice and guidance about personal issues are very effective. Many learners are very positive about the support and encouragement from staff that has helped them to acquire essential skills and confidence to improve their lives and employment prospects. Good close monitoring of learners' attendance and punctuality has enabled staff to take highly effective actions to support learners at the risk of leaving their courses too early.

- Learners benefit from a very effective induction programme that helps them settle quickly. They gain good knowledge about which members of staff are able to provide further support when they encounter personal problems or need to report any safeguarding concerns.
- Throughout courses, most tutors provide encouragement for learners to progress, for example, by discussing local vacancies. The college has also established arrangements for learners to discuss their progression plans with partner organisations. However, effective progression advice that the learners are offered varies too much in quality and effectiveness and requires improvement.
- Tutors promote an environment of inclusive learning well. They plan skilfully to ensure that all learners have an equal opportunity to participate and benefit from learning activities. Tutors are skilled in managing the potential barriers that learners face, such as language, which may prevent them from achieving their goals. In the best sessions, tutors promote equality and celebrate diversity actively. For example, in one session, the tutor made excellent use of Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech to explore both reading for meaning and equality issues.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In view of the college's significant budget reduction in the recent years, very effective management of change supported by dedicated staff has ensured that the college meets its mission. Since the last inspection, the college has focused well to improve the quality of the provision and the vast majority of learners succeed well.
- Provision is managed well; an open management style encourages all staff to contribute effectively to the development of the provision. For example, tutors lead and manage staff meetings. Managers and most tutors focus well on developing learners' skills in English and mathematics. For example, tutors have been encouraged to develop a brief guide to help learners with the most common types of mistakes in using grammar and punctuation.
- Governance is highly effective in supporting and challenging senior managers. The board members have a wide range of very relevant experience at strategic, operational, educational, and financial leadership and management. The members have a particularly good knowledge of the provision and take an exceptional interest in learners' work. For example, the chair of the curriculum and community sub-committee has sampled learners' work.
- Good staff development, including coaching opportunities and strong performance-management processes, has contributed well to the improvements in the quality of provision. Managers take swift action to challenge and improve weak performance.
- The self-assessment and quality improvement processes are thorough and implemented well. The self-assessment report has identified accurately most issues identified at the inspection. Learners' views are collected systematically, valued and acted upon; analysis of their views is very detailed and recorded well.
- The observation of teaching and learning process has been successful in ensuring that the vast majority of teaching and learning sessions are good or better. The records of observation of sessions, including short and ungraded observations, focus well on learning and indicate mostly accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All tutors agree an action plan following each observation; monitoring of the implementation of the actions is good. To ensure that tutors find the process developmental and are fully involved, they provide written feedback to the observers.
- The college uses its extensive knowledge of Bradford and the disadvantaged individuals in the boroughs to develop courses. It has shaped the curriculum successfully to develop learners' vocational skills in sectors with an increasing employment opportunity. For example, the development of a well-resourced Bistro and Deli restaurant in Bradford city centre provides good opportunities for work experience for an increasing number of learners.

- A strong ethos of widening participation is the notable character of the college. Learners from diverse backgrounds with a complex range of challenging personal experiences learn together well. Learners say that they are safe from incidents of harassment, bullying and discrimination. The college uses data well to ensure different groups of learners achieve equally well. A wide range of well-considered posters and displays promote equality and diversity, and challenge stereotypes.
- The college meets statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Arrangements to ensure that learners work in safe working environments and have any safeguarding issues addressed promptly are very effective. All staff who teach or support and guide learners have undergone all necessary checks as to their suitability to do so.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Forster Community College Limited

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	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	N/A	2
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	N/A	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	N/A	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	N/A	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Foundation English and mathematics	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 7							
	Part-time: 1,172							
Principal/CEO	Ms Sheila Philpott							
Date of previous inspection	May 2011							
Website address	http://www.forster.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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	152	N/A	51	N/A	87	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+		
	3	3	3	1	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	120							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 							

Contextual information

Forster Community College is a registered charity established 32 years ago. Its mission is to 'inspire learning and support communities to prosper through engaging hard-to-reach learners'. It is situated near Bradford centre, which is within the 10% most deprived areas in England. A quarter of the population has low levels of skills in using English and mathematics. The majority of provision is offered in Bradford, where the population is ethnically diverse and unemployment is higher than the national average. Most of the courses are between 5 to 24 weeks. Recently, the college has started to offer apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced levels in health and social care, hospitality and catering, and training to provide learning support.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Shahram Safavi HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the quality manager 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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