

# Milton Keynes College

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		24–28 Feb 2014
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-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:

- The proportion of students that gain their qualification is not sufficiently high across all areas of the college. Despite improvements in outcomes for learners since the previous inspection, too many students do not achieve their main qualification aim.
- Most teachers plan well-designed activities for learners, but do not always make sufficient use of them to reinforce, extend or check students' learning or enable students to make good progress. They do not always return marked work promptly or provide feedback to help students improve.
- Teachers pay insufficient attention, in lessons, to the development of students' skills in English and mathematics, or of students' deeper understanding of equality and diversity.
- The pace of improvement in teaching, learning and assessment is too slow. The college's observation programme is insufficiently accurate and has not always guided improvement well.
- Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of students and their readiness for learning at the start of lessons. Too many students arrive to lessons late, or are not properly prepared to contribute to lessons or equipped to take notes from their start.
- Apprentices make slow progress on their apprenticeships and too many of them leave without achieving their awards.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- Staff provide particularly good support for students with additional learning, support or personal needs to enable them to participate and progress.
- Teachers use links with employers very effectively, particularly in high performing subject areas, to inculcate high standards of professional practice and prepare students for employment.
- Its partnerships with employers, the community and the city provide information that enable managers to offer a curriculum that meets the needs of students and the local economy well.
- Its enrichment programme uses a wide range of extra-curricular and work-related activity to prepare students well for employment and life beyond college.
- Teachers' and managers' approach to inclusion and respect for one another is successful in creating a harmonious learning environment for students and staff.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the lesson observation programme is accurate and provides teachers with clear and effective guidance to help them improve in order to raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment across all subject areas.
- Increase the pace of improvement in teaching, learning and assessment in order to secure good outcomes for students.
- Set higher expectations and standards for students' punctuality, attendance and learning behaviours to improve their readiness for learning and students' attainment.
- Ensure that all students are set targets and challenged effectively in lessons to enable them to make good progress and achieve high standards.
- Ensure that all students' work is assessed and returned promptly, with detailed feedback that helps students improve and make better progress.
- Ensure that teachers routinely develop the English and mathematical skills of students during lessons to equip them for their studies and life beyond college.
- Make better use, in lessons, of opportunities for developing and extending students' understanding of equality and diversity.
- Monitor apprenticeship provision more closely and provide timely support and interventions that ensure apprentices make good progress and complete their awards.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of students who gain their intended qualification on long courses has improved since the previous inspection, and was broadly average in 2012/13. The number of students that start a college course and continue until its completion continues to improve and, at the time of this inspection, college data suggest that almost all students have been retained. However, improvements in students' achievements are patchy and in too many subjects are either recent or not sustained over time. For example, improvements at foundation level are greater than at intermediate or advanced level. Adult students do better than students aged 16 to 18. In three of the 12 sector subject areas offered by the college, which represent half its provision, the proportion of students gaining their intended awards is high. However, in the remaining nine sector subject areas these success rates require improvement or are low.</li> <li>▪ Apprentices' attainment of their awards is high in four of the nine sector subjects offered by the college. However, in the remaining five subject areas, apprentices make slow progress and the proportion that successfully complete their awards is low. The proportion of students gaining a functional skills qualification or GCSE at grade A* to C in English or mathematics is improving, but from a low base.</li> <li>▪ The prior attainment of students on vocational courses is broadly in line with students on these courses nationally; on GCE advanced level courses it is below average. Most students make the progress expected of them, given their starting points; a minority makes insufficient progress. The college recognises the need to improve students' progress and has begun to use monitoring software that is helping tutors to agree more demanding targets for students.</li> <li>▪ The standard of students' work is good in those subject areas with higher levels of attainment. In beauty therapy, for example, students mirror the high professional standards adopted in luxury spa treatment resorts. Students on elite sports teams are expected to perform well in their studies before they are allowed to participate, and are highly motivated to do so. In other</li> </ul>	

subjects, however, the standard of students' work is no more than adequate for the task or assignment set. Students are not always motivated enough to arrive at lessons punctually, ready and prepared for study and to contribute to learning. Teachers do not set sufficiently high standards for these behaviours.

- Managers have successfully improved students' attendance at lessons. They recognise, however, that this requires further improvement and continue to monitor attendance carefully and take action if students fail to attend. The college carefully monitors the performance of different groups and has been successful, for example, in improving the achievement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Students' progression to higher education or employment is good. A high proportion of those that apply for higher education are successful in gaining a place at university. The college is particularly successful in its work with young learners below the age of 16 who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to continue at school. These students are highly motivated by their study and support at college, are keen to further their studies and ambitious to progress. The college makes good use of its links with employers, and of its wide range of enrichment activities, to develop the employability of students and prepare them for life beyond college.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and reflect outcomes for learners. The standard of teaching varies too much across different subject areas and is not always sufficiently high to ensure that students are well prepared for learning, contribute effectively, make good progress and achieve the main aims of their study programmes.
- In stronger performing areas, such as hair and beauty and hospitality, staff have high expectations and demand high professional standards of their students. However, in other areas, teachers do not set sufficiently high standards for students. For example, during the week of inspection, attendance was low in many classes and too many students arrived late for lessons. Students do not always come to lessons properly prepared and ready to learn. For example, they do not bring paper, notebooks, or pens to make notes.
- The college has well-organised systems and processes to provide a wide range of learning support to all students with identified needs. Specialist staff and teams provide good support to students, both in class and on an individual basis. The college has successfully gained additional funding to provide supported programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has good arrangements for managing the transition to college of students with specific support needs.
- In good or better lessons, staff start punctually and challenge latecomers effectively. Teachers maintain a good pace in activity and learning. They develop a constructive rapport and good working relationships with their students. Students gain increased knowledge and understanding of their subject.
- However, too many lessons are not good enough. In weaker lessons, teachers are not sufficiently effective in using the activities planned to enable, reinforce or extend learning. The pace of learning is too slow and teachers do not always use effective checks to ensure that learning is taking place. Some of the activities they use are not sufficiently demanding and do not help students make better progress.
- Systems to identify students' starting points are effective. All learners have an initial assessment, and further diagnostic assessment if needed, to ensure that they make the right choice of programme at the right level. Tutors meet students regularly in group and individual tutorials. They make good use of proprietary software to record reports from relevant staff and monitor students' progress towards their targets.
- In the better performing areas, teachers give students useful feedback on their work to help them improve and make better progress. The college's structures to moderate and standardise assessment meet awarding body requirements. Marking is accurate and, in most cases, staff

identify and correct spelling and grammar mistakes. However, a significant number of students report that their marked work is often returned to them late and beyond the published deadline. Feedback is not always sufficiently detailed or is too late to aid improvement.

- Although the college is placing a much stronger emphasis on the development of students' English, mathematical and functional skills, in too many lessons tutors fail to recognise or make use of opportunities to incorporate the development of these skills into their teaching.
- The college has good systems for providing information, advice and guidance to students and for providing support to help them overcome personal difficulties. They work very effectively with a number of key agencies to provide careers advice and assistance in finding work placements, part-time and full-time employment.
- The college values equality and diversity and places particular emphasis on promoting a culture of equality in its vision and values. Students show high levels of respect to one another, and to staff, during classes and activities. However, teachers do not always promote a wider understanding of equality and diversity in lessons in order to broaden students' knowledge of other cultures or groups.

## Health and social care

### 16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and reflects outcomes for learners. Their progression to further learning is good, but the proportion gaining their intended qualification is below average on several courses and has declined over recent years. The majority of current students make satisfactory progress, but their attendance is low in too many sessions. The proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeships is low and current apprentices are making slow progress. The large number of students on courses that enable them to progress to higher education in healthcare achieve well. Curriculum managers have implemented a sound development plan to improve provision.
- In the better lessons teachers use their good vocational knowledge and experience to provide a wide variety of interesting activities that interest and motivate students. For example, in a lesson on the different stages of human development, students worked effectively in small groups to plan and deliver a presentation on the impact of retirement. This improved students' self-confidence and taught the students how to give constructive feedback. Students enjoy these sessions and value the good progress they make.
- Teachers plan lessons well, but in weaker lessons they do not implement these plans effectively to ensure that all students make good progress. The majority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of students. For example, they do not provide sufficient encouragement to students to ensure that they listen to each other during discussions of health care topics, or consider alternative views and opinions. In too many lessons students are eager to speak and be heard, but teachers do not manage this well enough to ensure that all students contribute effectively.
- In less effective lessons the pace of learning is too slow to ensure all students remain involved and interested. Students become distracted and do not make sufficient progress. Teachers do not always make sure that students understand the aims and objectives of their lessons and carry out too few checks on students' learning. Teachers use too narrow a range of activities and do not always show the enthusiasm for their subjects that would inspire and motivate students.
- Teachers use initial assessment effectively to gather essential background information about individual students and set them personal targets, such as arriving at lessons promptly and participating more actively in discussions. Students understand these targets, know what

progress they are making and value the support they receive from their teachers. In class discussions, teachers make effective use of students’ experience on work placements, but too few students receive visits from teachers to monitor their progress whilst on these placements.

- In a few observed lessons teachers provided dictionaries and highlighted important words, such as ‘dementia’ or ‘immunisation’, to improve students’ skills in speaking and spelling. However, the majority of teachers do not do enough to ensure that students improve their understanding and use of English and mathematics. Teachers do not plan mathematics activities well enough to ensure that questions are relevant to students’ interests and learning aims.
- Teachers make adequate use of technology to support and promote learning. The college has a useful virtual learning environment with a range of good resources to support learning, such as video recordings and teaching activities, and students use these resources well. Staff provide suitable information, advice and guidance. They are effective in guiding students’ progression to further learning and the majority of students have a clear understanding of what they intend to do once their course has ended.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity adequately. They work effectively to ensure all students are valued and feel supported. The staff team has been successful in creating an inclusive environment where students feel safe. Staff have good arrangements for meeting students’ individual needs and helping students overcome personal difficulties. However, teachers provide insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity in lessons to improve students’ understanding and develop their awareness of the importance of meeting different individuals’ care needs.
- Assessors do not visit apprentices frequently enough and do not ensure that employers are sufficiently involved in planning and reviewing apprentices’ progress. Assessment is not sufficiently well organised to ensure apprentices understand all of the elements of their programme. Assessors do not mark, record and return completed work quickly enough.

<p><b>Early years and playwork</b></p> <p><b>16-19 study programmes</b></p> <p><b>19+ Learning programmes</b></p> <p><b>Apprenticeships</b></p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as do outcomes for learners. In 2012/13, the proportions of students that gained foundation or intermediate level qualifications or the advanced diploma in children’s care, learning and development were high. However, one third of the students in this subject area took the advanced diploma for the children and young people’s workforce; the proportion that was successful was low. Students make the progress expected of them in lessons. During their placements in nurseries and schools, they develop good practical skills that enable them to progress to employment or the next level of study.
- Teachers and tutors provide good care and support for students. Staff are approachable and give encouraging guidance that helps students complete their courses, sometimes despite very difficult personal circumstances. Teachers monitor students’ progress effectively through regular tutorial reviews. They help students set realistic targets for improvement. Teachers and support staff work well together to ensure that students with specific learning or support needs can participate fully and succeed in their learning.
- In lessons, teachers make good use of a range of activities, and their own and students’ experiences, to link learning to the curriculum and practice in provision for very young children. In the better lessons, students work well towards their own targets, have good recall of prior learning and participate well in the session. In one class, students enjoyed using their creative skills to make ‘babies’ from bags of flour and explained clearly how they might use these models to support children’s learning.



- In less effective lessons, teachers have insufficiently high expectations of their students. They do not challenge students effectively, to help them answer questions more fully or to justify their reasoning. In many classes, teachers' methods for checking learning do not include all students, particularly in group discussion or plenary sessions. The pace of weaker lessons is slow and students do not make sufficient progress.
- Teachers make very effective use of feedback from employers to assess and monitor students' progress in their work placements and develop students' professional practice. Teachers give students constructive feedback on their written work to help them improve and reference their work correctly. However, in a minority of cases, teachers give too much work at once and do not return work promptly. In a small number of cases, delays in starting work placements have prevented students from making more rapid progress.
- The development of students' English and functional skills requires improvement. Teachers correct errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation in students' written work and remind students to use references correctly. In lessons, however, teachers do not always help students to develop their English, mathematics and information technology skills to the standards that are required for working in early years education settings.
- Teachers and tutors give students suitable initial advice, guidance and induction to their programmes. Students have a clear idea of the demands and nature of the courses they are studying. The majority of students enjoy their studies and say that they meet their needs and career intentions.
- Staff create an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusivity in the classroom and promote equality and diversity well. For example, in a lively debate about the rights of parents to bring up their children with particular religious beliefs, a hearing impaired student was enabled to participate fully. The few male students in this subject area feel well supported and confident. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not do enough to encourage students to explore in detail the equality and diversity topics that arise naturally during discussion.

## Engineering

**16-19 study programmes**  
**19+ Learning programmes**  
**Apprenticeships**

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate and this is reflected in poor outcomes for learners. Although students develop good personal, social and employability skills, the proportion of students gaining their intended qualifications in engineering have been low for a number of years. Until very recently, most students made slow progress and the standard of their work was no more than satisfactory. New departmental managers have made a good start in tackling this underperformance, but it is too soon to have had sufficient impact on the standard of provision in this subject.
- Recent changes in management and staffing have been beneficial. Students now feel that they are cared for by supportive teachers who are trying to ensure they achieve their qualification aims, have good learning experiences, and provide them with good advice and guidance on their next steps in education and employment. However, the majority of students remain concerned about the disruption to their learning caused by staffing changes and the impact of these on their progress. A small number of students are struggling to catch up.
- Many lessons are insufficiently demanding and do not inspire or motivate students. Teachers make ineffective use of activities to engage or challenge students and develop their knowledge and skill. The pace of these lessons is slow and students make insufficient progress. Teachers' explanations and instructions do not always give students the opportunity to process or analyse information, or to problem solve in order to help them learn. Teachers do not always check learning carefully to ensure that students understand, for example, how to read an engineering

diagram accurately rather than simply guess the answer to a question, and do not always link theory to practical work.

- In better progress reviews with students, teachers make good use of students’ prior attainment to prepare targets for students’ personal and academic development, particularly at advanced and higher levels. Teachers monitor and review students’ progress in reaching these targets regularly and provide good guidance to ensure students complete their courses. However, in weaker examples, and particularly at foundation and intermediate levels, teachers carry out these reviews infrequently and to an insufficiently high standard. They set targets for students that are too general, take insufficient account of students’ individual needs and do not help students make better progress.
- Teachers’ feedback following assessment requires improvement. Although a minority of better examples includes positive and encouraging comments, in weaker examples, feedback does not provide enough information to help students improve their knowledge and understanding of engineering concepts, develop their skills or improve their progress.
- The majority of students have low prior attainment in English and mathematics. Teachers do not do enough to develop students’ skills in these subjects during lessons or in their feedback on assignments. They make insufficient use of the many opportunities in engineering to improve students’ mathematical skills. For example, students are not encouraged to carry out calculations when working on dimensions in engineering diagrams.
- A minority of students participate in a range of well-designed externally sponsored events which are successful in developing good vocational and employability skills. These activities included a ‘Dragons’ Den’ project in which an engineering employer chose an innovative product design, the ‘Test Drive Talent’ where several engineering employers sponsored students into apprenticeships and the building of eight-foot high ‘Tin People’ to demonstrate these students’ excellent design skills.
- The college’s engineering workshops are equipped to a high standard. Machinery is well maintained and students use good quality tools and equipment in their studies. Although staff adopt suitable health and safety practices, they do not always do enough to promote a culture of high standards in health and safety.
- Teachers and technicians promote equality and diversity well. Students feel safe and have respectful attitudes towards one another in workshops and classrooms. In the better lessons, teachers develop students’ understanding further, for example promoting gender equality by challenging the use of terminology such as ‘tradesmen’. However, many teachers are not sufficiently confident to develop students’ understanding of equality and diversity more routinely in lessons.

<p><b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b></p> <p><b>16-19 study programmes</b></p> <p><b>19+ Learning programmes</b></p> <p><b>Select from drop down list</b></p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in outcomes for learners. The standard of their work is good. Students make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge and a high proportion go on to higher levels of study or employment. On beauty therapy courses, which attract large numbers of students, and on advanced level qualifications in hairdressing, the proportions that successfully gain their intended qualifications are high. On foundation and intermediate qualifications in hairdressing, the proportion that successfully achieves their qualifications is high, although many leave the programme before completing their awards. Of the 24 apprentices who left their programmes in 2012/13, two thirds were successful, but made slow progress, and most completed their apprenticeships after the planned

end date. Students’ attendance during the week of inspection was low, and their punctuality to some classes was poor.

- Teachers plan lessons well, making good use of learning activities to help students to take responsibility for their work and become independent. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate techniques that inspire and motivate students to achieve standards of work beyond their qualification aims. For example, in one class, students were challenged to combine advanced techniques in vertical and horizontal hair cutting to produce creative fashion styles. Teachers make good use of the college’s virtual learning environment to enrich and reinforce learning. They assess students’ learning very effectively, using a range of different methods.
- Students are confident about asking relevant questions and make good links between theory and practice, often referring to their own industrial work experience in discussion. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge and vocational experience which they use effectively to enhance students’ knowledge and understanding. They link theory to practice well, making good use of hairdressing and beauty examples to illustrate explanations.
- In the minority of less successful lessons students are less effectively involved in learning and make slower progress. Teachers’ questions are often too general and addressed to the group as a whole. They do not always extend or develop students’ knowledge and understanding. Although students work well, and creatively, on head forms in hairdressing practical classes, in a small number of sessions there have been too few clients for the number of students in the session.
- Teachers have high expectations of students, and adhere strictly to demanding standards of professionalism and personal appearance. In beauty therapy, for example, students are expected to maintain the ambience and professional approach adopted by the luxury spa with which the college has strong links. This is highly effective in developing positive attitudes and behaviours among students and preparing them for employment.
- Teachers provide good, constructive and helpful written feedback on the work in students’ portfolios. This helps students to make good progress and improve their skills further. They provide good support to enable students to identify and evaluate their own progress towards learning targets. These build effectively on previous knowledge and extend students’ learning.
- Support for students with additional learning or support needs is effective in helping them to progress. For example, students with dyslexia are given additional support which is successful in improving their confidence, raising their aspirations and enabling them to progress to higher levels of study. Students value and speak highly of the support they receive. Teachers and prestigious external beauty and hairdressing employers give students good motivational advice and guidance to support their learning and progression.
- The development of students’ English and mathematics in vocational lessons is not yet good. In written work, teachers often highlight grammar and spelling mistakes and encourage students to check their written English. In the better lessons, they promote good grammar and spelling well. During one group presentation, members of the class made constructive comments on grammatical errors in their peers’ work. However, the development of English and mathematical skills in lessons is not yet routine or well established.
- Teachers promote an inclusive and supportive atmosphere in their classes and students respond to it positively. However, students do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of equality and diversity. During lessons, teachers do not do enough to develop this understanding further.

<p><b>Sport, leisure and recreation</b></p> <p><b>16-19 study programmes</b></p> <p><b>19+ Learning programmes</b></p> <p><b>Select from drop down list</b></p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and enable students to achieve well. Most students complete their main qualification aim successfully. Students make good progress in theoretical



aspects of sport and in practical sports skills. They learn how sports governing bodies set rules and regulations for sports and participate well in a full range of sports such as rugby, basketball and football and other sports, practising these rules. The standard of their work is good, and many reach elite player status at national level, for example in the English Colleges Football Association. Students develop very good employability skills, gaining a wide range of qualifications of particular relevance to the sector, such as sports leadership and coaching awards. Their personal and social skills are good.

- Teachers are well qualified, with good sports industry experience in addition to their teaching qualifications. They use their expertise very effectively to enable learning. In theory lessons, teachers carefully plan explanations and activities to improve students' understanding. For example, in one lesson, students learned to give clear explanations of the functions of the heart and then performed practical tests on aerobic performance. However, in a few classes, students are not sufficiently well prepared for the lesson to make a prompt start to learning.
- In lessons, teachers check students' learning well, using a variety of methods, such as quick tests on types of motivation for athletes, or quizzes. However, in a small number of lessons, teachers make insufficient use of targeted questions to check students' understanding fully.
- Assessment is good. Teachers give students a variety of challenging assignments, many of which relate well to industry practice. In one example, students were asked to design fitness programmes to meet specific clients' needs. In sports therapy classes, students learned about the benefits of sports massage and then practised on one another to test their skill. Teachers give prompt, constructive feedback to students on their practical performance and written assignments. Their comments indicate clearly how students can improve their work and attain higher grades.
- Sports staff have developed very effective partnerships with local and national organisations working in the sports industry. These partners provide beneficial additional sports expertise or facilities for students who volunteer to provide coaching or to support events in return. Many partners and local schools provide work experience for students at holiday sports clubs for children. Work with these partnerships gives students good opportunities to practise their coaching and leading skills and is very effective in preparing students for work in the sector.
- Teachers provide good support for students. They are approachable and readily give extra information on sports theory or practice to those who need extra help or further challenge. They offer catch-up and study sessions which provide good additional development. Students use the college's virtual learning environment well to check their own progress and to set and review targets agreed with personal tutors.
- Teachers pay attention to spelling in their feedback on students' work, and emphasise the importance of good English and mathematics in lessons. However, they do not always ensure that lessons include opportunities for students to improve these skills as well as practise them.
- Sports students work in a highly inclusive environment and are respectful of each other and of staff. Teachers promote equality and diversity well in tutorials and in the study programme, placing particular emphasis on access to sport. For example, students provide curling events for wheelchair users.

## Business management

### 16-19 study programmes

### 19+ Learning programmes

### Select from drop down list

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected in outcomes for learners. Students make the progress expected of them but are not challenged sufficiently to achieve high standards of work or better progress in lessons and their qualifications. Progression to higher

qualifications or employment is good. Many students make good personal and social progress, and improve their employability skills.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and use their detailed knowledge of individual students to plan and prepare a wide range of learning activities, but do not always implement these well to meet the needs of students successfully. In following their lesson plans, teachers sometimes rush through activities, giving students insufficient time to reflect on key points. In contrast, in a better business lesson on recruiting staff, the teacher changed the pace and timing of the session successfully to respond to students when they became particularly interested in how they might fill specific job vacancies. This was very effective in developing their understanding of recruitment and in preparing them for their own employment.
- In better lessons, teachers set high standards of conduct and expect contributions from all students. They create an environment in which individual students make good progress through different levels of activity that stretch their capabilities. Students respond to this very well and work productively. In a human resources lesson, for example, students successfully discussed their experiences of appraisal with peers in a sensitive way. In less successful lessons, students do not contribute effectively, attendance is low, latecomers are unchallenged and teachers tolerate other infringements, such as low levels of noise, too readily.
- Teachers make suitable links, in lessons, between business theory and professional practice. Many provide useful case studies or create examples to guide and develop students' understanding of commercial practices. The college provides good resources to support learning. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of current business events taking place locally, nationally or globally to challenge or motivate students. They do not always relate concepts, such as marketing and employment, to their own experience.
- In most lessons, teachers use observation and questions to carry out suitable checks on students' progress. However, in many cases, their questions do not probe students' understanding to help develop the deeper analytical and critical skills that students require for employment or higher education. Often, a few students are allowed to give most answers. In contrast, a teacher in a successful business lesson asked paired students to give explanations to each other and then devise their own questions. This was very effective in developing students' understanding and provided the teacher with good information on their progress.
- Teachers give students detailed and constructive written feedback on their assignments which helps them to improve. They give good verbal direction and guidance on students' work in lessons and outside classrooms. However, they return too many assignments to students very late; students find this unhelpful and confusing.
- Most teachers give students good advice and guidance that ensure they are placed on the right course for their needs. Their induction and tutorials support students well. Teachers and support staff provide good learning support for individuals in lessons. Tutors carry out regular progress reviews with students, but the individual targets and action points they set are often too general to help students make better progress.
- Teachers develop students' English well. They make good use of opportunities for practising communications skills in lessons to develop students' use of correct and appropriate business language. They use financial calculations well to develop students' mathematical skills. Business enterprise students, for example, calculated their costs when travelling to work placements, using fuel prices for different cars to determine how much this would demand of their budgets.
- Teachers are successful in establishing a strong inclusive culture of respect in lessons. Students from very different backgrounds are integrated and valued in all lessons very successfully. However, teachers do not do enough to develop students' wider knowledge and understanding of cultural differences when there are opportunities to do so.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Requires improvement

- The Principal and governors have established an ambitious vision for the college, in which it is both a key resource and contributor to the economic prosperity of Milton Keynes, with a strong commitment to using learning to improve the quality of life for local residents and other stakeholders. Their strategic plan is detailed and closely aligned with the strategic objectives of the city.
- Governors have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. They monitor the college's financial position closely. However, they have provided insufficient challenge to senior managers to ensure more rapid and widespread improvement in the quality of provision. They recognise the need to monitor standards in teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners more closely, and have recently refocused their work accordingly. However, some of the targets they have agreed for monitoring progress in making these improvements are insufficiently demanding.
- The college has made suitable and significant changes to its arrangements for the performance management of staff. However, managers' actions to improve performance in several weaker areas of provision have been too slow; teaching, learning and assessment in these areas, and the attendant outcomes for learners, are not yet good. Lesson observations do not always identify accurately weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, and follow-up actions to improve standards have not been sufficiently effective across all subject areas. In its self-assessment report, and in a few observations of teaching carried out jointly between college staff and inspectors, the college's assessment of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was over generous. The college has a newly-created team of innovation and improvement leaders, appointed to help teachers improve their practice, but it has not yet secured consistently high quality teaching across the college as a whole.
- The college has an appropriate range of clearly-scheduled quality monitoring processes that contribute to its self-assessment. Managers review course performance at monthly challenge meetings and take suitable and swift action to improve if the need is identified. They make good use of data to help form judgements about provision. The college uses an appropriate range of activities, including learner focus groups, the newly-established student union and learner surveys to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement. The resulting self-assessment report is evaluative but over-emphasises the college's strengths. The attendant quality improvement plan has clear targets; its implementation is monitored carefully by managers.
- The college has particularly effective partnerships with local organisations such as its local authority, schools, universities and employers. It makes good use of the information that it gathers from these partnerships to plan and provide a curriculum that is closely aligned to local needs. It is successful in attracting a wide range of students, including those from areas of high deprivation or who are disadvantaged, to participate and it serves these students well. Its curriculum provides choice and good opportunities for students to progress to courses at higher levels, to higher education or to employment.
- A particularly successful feature of senior leaders' work since the previous inspection has been the promotion of an organisational culture that values individuals and promotes inclusion and respect for others. This is well established and understood by students and staff. The college's equality scheme and detailed action plan support the college's ambition for an inclusive community. Learners treat each other with respect, and teachers foster good working relationships at college. The college gives staff appropriate equalities training. However, managers do not ensure that teachers do enough to improve students' wider understanding of equality and diversity in lessons.
- The college's arrangements for safeguarding are good and meet legislative requirements. The college has suitable recruitment and vetting processes for staff and governors. Managers and staff monitor students at risk closely and take suitable action to help keep students and staff safe.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

<b>Milton Keynes College</b>									
<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-
Outcomes for learners	<b>3</b>	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>3</b>	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>3</b>	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Health and social care</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Sport, leisure and recreation</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Business management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16–19+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 3,542							
	Part-time: 7,832							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Dr Julie Mills							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2011							
<b>Website address</b>	www.mkcollege.ac.uk							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	450	156	732	142	1477	448	0	3
<b>Part-time</b>	143	1239	111	1452	91	1046	29	375
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	148	278	67	416	0	34		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	72							
<b>Part-time</b>	73							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	210							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Premier Training</li> <li>■ Thames Valley Police</li> <li>■ Free to Learn</li> <li>■ McKenzie Arnold</li> </ul>							



## Contextual information

Milton Keynes College is a large general further education college on three sites in Milton Keynes. The city has a history of low educational attainment. The college works with a wide range of employers and the local authority to provide vocational and academic courses to meet local needs. Most students are on vocational courses. The college also holds a contract for the provision of education and training for prisoners and offenders in custody and contracts for enabling unemployed people to gain work. The city has significant pockets of severe economic deprivation among its more affluent areas.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Penelope Horner HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the executive director for innovation and improvement as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college. 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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