

Stockton Riverside College

General further education college

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| Inspection dates | | 28 April–2 May 2014 |
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Good-2 |
| | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement-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 college is good because:

- The proportion of learners successfully completing their qualifications has continued to rise and is now above the national average for similar colleges.
- Learners benefit from a broad range of outstanding opportunities to develop their employability skills.
- Learners at all levels are well prepared for, and have very high levels of, progression into suitable employment, further training or higher education.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are now predominantly at least good.
- Learners enjoy their learning.
- Teachers plan well to develop expert and independent learners.
- All staff are committed to raising further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspirational leadership has resulted in strong, decisive, devolved and accountable management at all levels.
- The quality improvement process continues to drive forward rapid improvements.
- Managers have developed purposeful links within the community which result in a coherent local skills strategy that is highly beneficial to learners.

This is not yet an outstanding college because:

- Success rates for English and mathematics functional skills qualifications require further improvement.
- A significant minority of learners do not reach their full potential based upon their prior attainment.
- A small minority of teachers do not track and monitor learners' progress well enough and the quality and usefulness of the targets that they set require further improvement.
- The embedding of equality and diversity within lessons is inconsistent. Not all teachers have the skills or confidence to challenge poor behaviour or inappropriate use of language.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Continue the sustained improvements that have already been made to the success rates for functional skills English and mathematics qualifications.
- Analyse data in greater depth to identify where learners should be achieving better grades and intervene swiftly to improve performance.
- Increase the thoroughness of progress monitoring for learners to ensure that targets are challenging and that learners know what they need to do to succeed and are supported to achieve their full potential.
- Ensure that all managers identify and are familiar with key headline data and targets relevant to the provision that they manage.
- Provide more support to enable teachers to challenge poor behaviour or inappropriate use of language. Ensure that the diversity within the community is celebrated more routinely and consistently well in teaching sessions.

Inspection judgements

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| Outcomes for learners | Good |
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- The proportion of learners successfully achieving their qualifications has risen steadily over the last three years and is now above the average for similar colleges. Learners taking engineering, teacher training, and advanced-level English and mathematics courses achieve particularly well as do the learners who are on courses that the college has subcontracted to other providers. The small number of apprentices achieve outstanding success rates and the large majority complete their training within the allocated time.
- Learners taking courses in construction, business studies and social sciences achieve less well; these success rates require further improvement. Learners on advanced-level vocational courses make expected progress based upon their prior attainment; however, the smaller number of A-level and AS-level learners do not make sufficient progress. The proportion of learners successfully gaining functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics has risen sharply, particularly in the last year, but the rates are still only broadly in line with the national averages. However, there continues to be sustained improvement, particularly in English, during the current academic year.
- There are no significant differences in achievement between groups of learners, who achieve equally well regardless of their gender or ethnic heritage. Achievement rates for adult learners, which were low at the last inspection, have improved and are now similar to those for younger learners. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve particularly well. However, a significant minority of A-level and AS-level learners are not currently on track to meet their target grades in the summer examinations.
- Learners enjoy their studies or training and the enthusiasm and expertise of their teachers and assessors ensure that they are motivated to produce high standards of work and to make good progress. Learners arrive on time to lessons or the workplace and their attendance rates are high and still improving. Retention rates have increased further from the same point in time during the last academic year.
- Learners at all levels benefit from a range of outstanding opportunities to improve their employability. For example, advanced-level information and communication technology (ICT) learners work with a local council on stimulating projects to provide posters for display around the borough and performing arts learners regularly stage shows to full houses in the town's commercial theatre.

- Innovative collaborations with local businesses help to inspire and support learners who are considering setting up their own business. Each year several hundred of the hardest to reach, unemployed young people gain valuable experiences of teamwork, independent living and the work place through their placements on the Prince's Trust programme. The large majority of these young people then progress to further learning, training, employment or voluntary work.
- Learners have access to a wide range of resources that enable them to develop their English and mathematics skills and to gain the confidence that many of them need to progress. College staff take every opportunity to reinforce the importance of gaining qualifications in these subjects. Learners regularly use the drop-in centres, where they benefit from a good balance of support and challenge from the teachers who are available throughout the day. Learners participate with enthusiasm in events designed to raise awareness of broader issues such as sustainability.
- The college's curriculum provides very good opportunities for learners to progress to higher levels of learning or training from entry-level right through to a foundation degree. Appropriate skills' development is extremely well embedded into learners' programmes. Much improved, thorough systems are in place that capture the destinations of the vast majority of learners when they complete their courses. Learners are very successful at securing meaningful employment relating to their vocational area. Teachers support A-level learners well in their applications to higher education and the large majority of these learners acquire places.

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| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
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- Enthusiastic teachers and managers have a strong commitment to improving teaching, learning and assessment, which is now predominantly good and in a significant minority of cases outstanding. Providing high-quality teaching that supports learners to be successful on their courses and in gaining employment is a key strategic priority for the college, and the positive impact since the last inspection is evident.
- Learners enjoy learning. They value the way teachers involve them in their learning and devise new ideas to make lessons more interesting. In the large majority of lessons, teachers plan well to develop expert and independent learners. For example, in a nail technology lesson, learners were responsible for arranging their client's session, planning their resources and design, and working to a professional timeframe. Childcare learners developed their ICT skills by producing a course newsletter and resources to use in the workplace. Learners use the high-quality learning resource centre well to research and work independently.
- Teachers are well qualified and have good industrial experience, which they use appropriately to develop learners' practical and employability skills. Teachers have high expectations of learners and this contributes to learners making good progress, but not all teachers reinforce these expectations in lessons. For example, they do not always challenge poor punctuality.
- Teachers plan a wide range of activities which enhance learners' skills and knowledge. For example, visits to places of interest such as museums, galleries and workplaces, visiting speakers and periods of work placement. These activities have clear learning objectives and teachers build them into the course of study. A-level learners participate in many activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and 'thinking about thinking' groups to develop personal skills, enhance their curriculum vitae and strengthen their higher-education applications.
- Staff use technology well to support and motivate learners. Closed Facebook pages are popular with learners, and teachers employ these effectively to share resources and experiences. In the very small minority of weaker lessons teachers fail to motivate learners effectively; they do not use technology to gain learners' interest and in some instances answer their own questions with the result that learners are not sufficiently challenged.
- Learners value the well-considered and easily accessible support system. Effective schools liaison starts the process: support workers engage with the learners' schools, parents and carers early in the recruitment process to ensure that planned support is in place before learners enrol.

Independent learning practitioners work effectively with learners identified as having support needs.

- Initial assessment is thorough. Staff use a wide range of information about learners, including the results of diagnostic tests, previous qualifications and information from interview to set challenging and aspirational targets which are often higher than the predicted grade. Personal tutors monitor learners’ progress regularly but further refinement of setting and monitoring targets and progress to support learners to achieve is required.
- Staff use questioning well to assess learners’ understanding and knowledge in lessons. Oral feedback is constructive, helpful and challenges learners to improve. In teacher education and childcare, teachers use peer assessment well to consolidate learning and to share good practice. Learners, especially A-level learners, have regular and meaningful homework that helps them to consolidate and develop their understanding. Assessment is accurate, teachers return work promptly and the majority provide written feedback which is helpful and provides learners with clear recommendations as to how they can improve. However, in a minority of subjects such as chemistry and health and social care, feedback is insufficiently detailed.
- Learners can submit work through the virtual learning environment, teachers mark and return this work promptly. Media, sport and music technology teachers use this facility to provide oral feedback to learners which they attach to the learners’ work. This feedback is very detailed and learners value its clarity in coaching them to improve. Most teachers routinely correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in written work.
- Managers have made rapid progress in developing a programme to meet learners’ needs in English and mathematical skills. Learners understand the importance of acquiring these skills in helping them gain employment. Teaching of mathematics functional skills in discrete lessons is lively. Learners attend and participate and this is reflected in the improving success rates. Learners access very useful additional support in English and mathematics through the CORE drop in centres, the college’s specific provision to support English and mathematics. Vocational teachers are trained to deliver English and mathematics but they do not always embed these functional skills sufficiently into their lessons.
- Learner services’ staff use a wide range of skills to provide good support for learners including practical advice on finance, transport, part-time employment, career guidance and support with higher-education applications. Learners value this support, which enables them to attend and complete their courses and progress further. A vibrant and dynamic Go Further campaign culminating in a progression week provides a range of stimulating and informative activities which support learners’ progression to higher-level courses or to employment.
- Teachers provide a welcoming and respectful learning environment in lessons, but a minority of staff are insufficiently skilled to promote equality and diversity effectively in teaching and learning beyond the minimum expectations of the course. A minority of teachers lack the confidence to tackle the few instances of learners’ poor behaviour or use of offensive language.

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| <p>Health and social care</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> | <p>Good</p> |
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This is reflected in the rapid increase in success rates on all courses to just above the national average. Current data indicate that retention rates and attendance have improved further this year. College learners develop a wide range of skills, essential to providing high-quality care for their prospective client group. Apprentices build their confidence and improve their employability skills due to the effective liaison between their employers and the college staff. The relationship between the college and the local hospital trust has a very positive impact on access to learning and employment opportunities for learners.

- In the majority of lessons, learners make good progress. Teachers plan carefully, support learning through skilful questioning and good oral feedback, and praise learners regularly. Learners benefit from the well-targeted care and support they receive from their teachers.
- Teachers and assessors are appropriately qualified and vocationally experienced and use this knowledge well to plan sessions and make learning meaningful. Learners are encouraged by teachers to link theory to their own experiences and practice. For example, in one outstanding session the teacher used open questions skilfully so that the learners were able to reflect, challenge their own preconceptions of mental illness and articulate the needs of individuals.
- In a small minority of lessons, learners do not have enough opportunities to contribute, to participate in peer learning or have their feedback challenged to develop deeper knowledge and understanding. Teachers do not use technology creatively and activities are prolonged and unimaginative, which leaves learners uninterested and not sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential.
- Teachers initially assess learners’ individual needs thoroughly and use the results effectively. Teachers are skilled at supporting learners both in and outside of the classroom, learners value this and it helps them to achieve and progress to the next level. Learners with dyslexia spoke positively about the support they received that has enabled them to feel more confident with their written work.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory. Oral feedback following assessments is thorough and probing questions from teachers and assessors help learners to consider what they have achieved. Written feedback addresses the skills that learners require to achieve their qualifications but does not pay sufficient detail to extending learners’ knowledge so that they are better prepared for employment or higher education.
- Learners develop their English skills well in lessons. Teachers introduce learners to a wide range of vocational language and definitions and encourage the use of dictionaries to check spellings and meanings. Learners develop confidence in speaking, reading aloud and presenting information and demonstrate effective communication skills. Teachers do not routinely use opportunities to develop mathematical skills. Learners have regular support to develop ICT skills for use in their studies and in the work place.
- Learners benefit from good levels of advice and guidance from experienced staff. Teachers use information to place learners on appropriate courses. They ensure that learners are aware of the different progression opportunities and support them well in achieving their learning and career goals, as well as personal and welfare issues. For example, an adult learner described how staff had enabled him to develop a very clear career pathway that began with a foundation-level course and had culminated in him receiving an offer of a university place.
- Teachers promote equality, diversity and inclusion well and use appropriate terminology with learners to model the skills and knowledge required for dealing with the diverse range of people in both the community and the workplace. However, learners do not have sufficient opportunity to develop a wider understanding of equality and diversity in society and in a few instances teachers do not routinely address learners’ careless use of language.

Mathematics and statistics

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which has resulted in outstanding success and high-grade rates on advanced-level courses that are well above the national averages for similar colleges. Learners enjoy these lessons and the vast majority progress to university. Learners’ attendance rates are very high on advanced-level courses. However, the proportion of learners achieving high grades in GCSE mathematics is only just above the low national average and requires further improvement.

- Teachers use a variety of activities that interest and motivate learners and help them to develop rapidly their problem-solving skills. For example, in an advanced-level lesson learners were working well in groups to analyse why the teacher's answer to a complex question on algebra was incorrect. Team leaders reported their findings to the rest of the class, leading to an interesting debate on the best methodology for answering the question. Teachers use simple, effective techniques to ensure that learners remember basic concepts; for example, by making up short songs or repeating sayings such as 'cross the bridge, change the sign', which is used for manipulating formulae.
- Learners are especially good at explaining the reasoning behind their working out, demonstrating a solid understanding of the concept they are working on. Learners struggling on a problem make good progress by asking their peers for help, either in lessons or through the effective mentoring scheme where second year A-level learners are assigned to first year learners to help them through any difficult concepts. However, there are insufficient resources in classrooms to allow learners to find solutions for themselves when they are working on a difficult problem, causing them to rely too much on the teacher for help.
- Learners access a well-stocked virtual learning environment that has useful presentations and examination exercises. It also contains videos of teachers explaining topics, which is a useful revision tool. GCSE learners have good, clear workbooks and handouts that guide them through the lesson and allow them to revisit concepts at home, which is especially useful for the adult learners who only attend college once each week.
- Teachers set appropriate homework for advanced-level learners regularly and return it promptly with useful comments on how to improve. The comments are often very specific, for example 'divide out first', and sometimes take the form of a question, which encourages the learners to review their answers more closely and to think for themselves. Teachers do not ensure that all GCSE learners complete and hand in their homework.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan enough activities to match the wide range of learners' abilities and do not sufficiently challenge the more able learners. Teachers stay too long on the same activity and learners begin to lose interest and make slower progress.
- Assessment of learners' progress and the provision of additional support are very good. Learners value greatly the extra help that is always available, both from timetabled sessions and the informal help offered outside lesson time. GCSE learners often contact their teacher by email with specific queries and receive prompt and helpful replies.
- Teachers have high expectations of advanced-level learners, who in turn show a commitment to their studies. These learners set clear, regular targets for themselves on what they need to do to improve. However, this process is less effective for GCSE learners because teachers allow them to set targets that are too generic and open ended. Learners on the higher GCSE mathematics course are not encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- Learners develop their employability skills by frequently participating in group work and peer assessment and teachers relate mathematical concepts to real-life situations whenever possible. For example, in a GCSE lesson learners were investigating how quadratic equations could be used to analyse packing-box sizes.
- Posters demonstrating aspects of equality and diversity are on all the classroom walls but teachers do not do enough in lessons to reinforce these ideas. Teachers promote good spoken English well in lessons through discussion and debate, but sometimes miss opportunities to improve learners' spelling.

Information and communication technology

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Success rates have improved significantly over the last three years to above the national average for similar colleges, and at the same time learner numbers have increased steadily. The large majority of learners progress on to higher-level programmes, university or employment. However, achievement rates are low in a very small minority of programmes.
- Effective working relationships between learners and teachers ensure that all learners make very good progress. Teachers know their learners well and take account of their individual needs. In the best lessons, learners make rapid and sustained progress. For example, in an advanced-level lesson learners self-assessed their programs, set meaningful and precise targets for further development, and reviewed their progress later in the class.
- Teachers have high expectations of learners and ensure that they are on track to achieve their full potential. Teachers motivate learners by sharing their individual progress on the learners' computer screens. For example, in a supported study session the teacher encouraged every learner to achieve all possible criteria for every assignment by displaying the course tracking on learners' personal computers.
- Teachers draw on their extensive industrial experience to help learners develop strong employability skills. For example, a teacher with expertise in ICT and network support used virtualisation to give learners real-life networking experience. Learners develop communication skills further by working on real-life project briefs.
- The majority of teachers plan lessons well so that they include a good range of strategies that match learners' individual needs effectively. However, in the lessons that require improvement, the limited range of teaching and learning strategies results in learners becoming disinterested and making insufficient progress.
- Teachers monitor learners' progress very effectively. They use online systems very well to set and review targets for learners with the result that learners are motivated to achieve their full potential. In a small minority of cases, the targets set are vague and unquantifiable.
- Teachers use good questioning skills to check and extend learning. In most lessons they adopt a range of open and directed questions with supplementary questions to probe and develop learners' understanding. In a very small minority of lessons questioning is limited, which results in learners providing only superficial answers and not developing their higher-level thinking skills.
- Teachers assess the majority of learners' progress regularly and accurately, providing effective written and verbal feedback so that learners know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. Learners also benefit from regular reviews with their personal tutor to review their progress and set targets for further improvement. However, teachers do not assess A-level learners' work with sufficient frequency to permit swift intervention, with the result that a small minority of learners continue to underachieve.
- Learners develop independent learning skills by tackling complex and creative tasks individually. For example, in a lesson on spreadsheets, learners examined their own formulae to identify where the errors were, gaining in confidence from this challenging task.
- Learners develop their English skills well, but teachers have not embedded mathematics skills across all programmes. Literacy errors are corrected on learners' work and learners are encouraged to correct each other's errors when peer-assessing work. Lessons frequently include exercises to reinforce English skills. For example, in a web-design lesson learners spotted deliberate spelling errors in a word search and identified why these errors in their coding would cause issues. They were able to describe why they should use the American English spelling for 'color' in their code, but the English spelling in their assignment work. In a small minority of lessons, there were errors in the learning resources provided, in tutor feedback and on the wall displays.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity and teachers plan activities which develop these themes. For example, in a lesson on digital photography, the teacher deliberately selected career ambitions to challenge gender stereotypes. Teachers ensure that the diverse

range of backgrounds of learners is integrated into lessons. A lesson about the encoding of data addressed gender reassignment by debating the use of only male and female to record gender identity in a database.

Leisure, travel and tourism

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This is reflected in the improving success rates, which are outstanding for aviation courses and around the national averages for similar colleges for sport and travel and tourism courses. Teachers engender high aspirations in learners and consequently their attendance rates are high. Learners understand what they need to do to be successful and the vast majority progress to higher-level study, training or employment.
- In the best lessons teachers' planning of learning considers the needs of individual learners well. Teachers use a range of well-paced, interesting and active teaching strategies to involve and motivate learners. They use effective questioning techniques to check learners' understanding of key concepts and provide good levels of challenge. They use resources creatively to support learning. As a result learners make good progress. For example, in a sport lesson learners worked collaboratively with mobile phone technology to develop their observation skills and learn the tactics of a given sport. They were then able to explain confidently how the theory informs and influences the analysis of team performance.
- Opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge and understanding are varied and excellent. Supported by teachers with strong vocational experience, learners participate in a wide range of activities, which enables them to develop and enhance their skills well. Travel and tourism and aviation learners participate in a varied programme of events to gain valuable experience of the workplace. For example, trips to the local airport have enabled learners to gain an insight into working as a member of the cabin crew.
- Learners benefit from the industrial experience of staff to understand the skills they require to gain employment in the sports sector. Teachers use a good range of physical resources well to support the development of sports learners' practical skills. Teachers invest much time and effort in promoting and maintaining competitive team sports and learners regularly participate in, and highly value, these additional enrichment activities.
- Learners receive high standards of care, guidance and support from staff. Arrangements to track and monitor learners' attendance, achievement and progress are frequent and systematic. This enables staff to effectively identify support for those at risk of not completing their studies. Teachers guide learners effectively to take responsibility for setting and achieving their own targets. For example, in one lesson, teachers assessed small steps in learning to support research skills. Support for learners with additional needs is good and leads to high levels of achievement.
- Teachers use a good range of assessment methods to check learners' knowledge, skills and understanding regularly. They innovatively use assessment workbooks on sport courses that are effective in supporting good levels of progress and high-grade achievement. The majority of the written feedback by teachers is detailed, providing useful guidance to help learners improve. However, in a few instances, the feedback is insufficiently detailed so does not enable learners to know how to progress further.
- Teachers use information on learners' prior attainment and support needs to plan for effective learning. Teachers develop learners' English skills well in the majority of lessons. For example, they reinforce the importance of key vocational subject terminology and correct learners' spelling and grammatical errors. Displays of relevant spelling on posters support learners to develop their English skills. Teachers are less adept at embedding the development of learners' mathematical skills during lessons.

- Teachers plan lessons to include themes around equality and diversity and learners address these themes well in their assignments, demonstrating good awareness. However, teachers are not so adept at challenging stereotypical views and promoting inclusive practice in lessons. Learners are well behaved and demonstrate good levels of mutual respect.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Changes in the management and delivery of courses have resulted in significant and rapid improvements to success rates in the last academic year. They are now in line with national rates and in-year examination achievement indicates further sustained improvement.
- Teachers have high expectations of their learners and plan lessons very well to make learning enjoyable and challenging. Staff are enthusiastic and well qualified. Most have good occupational knowledge of their learners' main vocational areas of study and use this well to interest learners and provide learning that is relevant to them. For example, a teacher set a written task for media learners on the theme of producing an article for a games magazine.
- Teachers use learning tasks and activities well to motivate learners and to ensure that they contribute to discussion and develop their oral communication skills. They question learners frequently, and use group and paired activities well to promote skills in working with others. Teachers monitor and assess learners' progress in lessons effectively. They use targeted questioning skilfully and reiterate learning during, and at the end of lessons, to check and consolidate learners' understanding. Frequent advice, feedback and tips given by teachers about examination techniques prepare learners very well for their tests.
- Teachers demonstrate a consistent approach to lesson planning and schemes of work in the large majority of sessions, which promotes a clear structure and path through the planned learning. Where classes include learners with a range of different functional skills levels, teachers plan well to ensure that the learning activities are appropriate for every learner in the class. Teachers deploy additional learning support staff well to ensure that all learners make good progress.
- Learners make very good use of electronic resources, such as interactive voting handsets, to demonstrate their understanding to one another and to their teacher. Teaching is often lively, imaginative and relevant. For example, in one lesson, learners used resources such as current television advertisements to explore persuasive language devices. Teachers deploy resources skilfully to develop comprehension and group discussion, leading to significant improvement in learners' reading, oral and written skills.
- Teachers use electronic systems effectively to track and monitor learners' progress. The quality and depth of written feedback on learners' assignments are good. Teachers give praise and identify what has been done correctly, and give constructive and personalised advice for improvement.
- Independent learning practitioners and teachers work well together in classes. They use learner profiles to good effect to target support effectively, demonstrating commitment to making appropriate adjustments to support learners to achieve and progress. Additional support is very flexible and designed to meet individual needs, including extra help in the CORE. Learners benefit from the high-quality support they receive here, and the staff working in this area throughout the day are a key factor in improving learners' skills and building their confidence.
- College staff offer a range of innovative and accessible resources to raise the profile and standard of English across the college, not just in functional skills and GCSE. Learners and apprentices speak highly of these resources. They give many good examples of how they have

been helped to choose the right course or training and supported to progress to higher education or employment.

- A culture of inclusivity, respect and meeting learners' individual needs underpins foundation English courses. Teachers use opportunities for small group work well to engage and include all learners. Teachers use good learning resources within lessons to promote equality and diversity, which include short films challenging gender roles, for example, a video about young female truck drivers.

Employability training and foundation learning

16-19 study programmes Employability

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This is reflected in improved success rates on taught courses, which are now at least in line with national averages, and in an increased proportion of positive outcomes for learners who are seeking to improve their employment opportunities. The vast majority of learners progress to further education or employment.
- The majority of learning is planned well by teachers. They use a good range of appropriate learning activities, alongside skilled questioning, to ensure that the large majority of learners make good progress. Learners benefit from high expectations, care and support from their teachers and are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Learners develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem and recognise the importance of a positive attitude towards work, for example, being punctual and suitably dressed.
- In a very small minority of lessons teachers do not plan sufficiently well to ensure that all learners fulfil their potential or that progress is rapid enough. Teachers do not use questioning well to check learners understanding. In these lessons, teachers do too much of the task for learners, which limits the opportunities for learners to develop and reinforce their learning.
- Teachers support learners to develop a wide range of personal, social, vocational and academic skills, such as teamwork, independent living and supporting each other. Learners make very good progress in developing these employability skills. Teachers ensure that learners are able to carry out their own research with confidence and then reflect upon and evaluate their own practice.
- Teachers use a wide variety of appropriate methods to carefully assess learners' work. Written feedback on the majority of assignments provides clear guidance on what learners need to do to improve their work including the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. However, a small minority of written feedback is insufficiently detailed to enable learners to understand how to do better next time.
- Teachers support learners well to develop and reinforce their English skills. They have very high expectations for learners to develop and improve writing skills. Learners use these skills confidently in undertaking written tasks and routinely correct their own work. Learners on a community project programme used their written and spoken communication skills to set their own targets and review the outcomes for the lesson. They questioned each other about the skills they had developed and how these contributed towards the community as a whole. They then wrote these on a mind map for the class to share and, consequently, every learner developed their skills.
- Teachers provide learners with too few opportunities to develop and reinforce their mathematics skills. In these less effective classes, teachers fail to promote the mathematics skills necessary to be successful in a particular vocational area. For example, during a hospitality and catering lesson, teachers did not ensure that learners were confident in changing recipe quantities for different numbers of clients.
- Learners make good use of, and benefit from, the excellent information, advice and guidance they receive from both the college staff and external advisory agencies. They are able to make

informed choices about the next steps in their training, education or employment. The majority work towards and meet their personal ambitions. The support is especially effective for adult learners on the pre-employability programmes who use the information and advice well to research employment opportunities, complete their curriculum vitae, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. The excellent support for transition into college provided for foundation-level learners on study programmes, helps them understand and prepare for their return to life in education.

- Learners demonstrate a high level of respect for each other, their teachers and those in the wider community. For example, learners undertaking a community project demonstrated a good understanding of equality and diversity themes which they used well when decorating a games room in a care home. However, in a minority of lessons teachers are insufficiently proactive in raising learners' awareness of the diverse backgrounds of the people that they will be working with in the future.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the newly-appointed Principal has had a significant, positive impact in motivating all staff to rapidly improve the standards of education and training provided at the college, which are now good. A better-trained and more diverse governing body is a good custodian of quality at the college. The college improvement plan clearly defines objectives and targets against purposeful strategic priorities. Managers are accountable for the devolved decisions they make to achieve precise and challenging targets. Staff understand and trust fully the governors' and Principal's vision and operational ideas and they see real improvement in their ability to make a difference for learners and apprentices. They have a clear picture of the current quality of learning and have high expectations for themselves and their learners.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection. They have implemented an extensive professional development programme targeted at sharpening teachers' practice, providing them with greater confidence in using a variety of learning tools and creating a strong sense that teaching and teachers matter. Learning coaches and managers are providing effective support for teachers and newsletters present a variety of stimuli to help teachers reflect and improve on their teaching. The Principal creates the conditions for enterprise and opportunity to develop staff with the right skills into managerial roles but also recognises the importance of high-quality teaching.
- Managers have put into practise a strong performance-management system based on greater freedom with accountability that is embraced by staff. A revised policy for the observations of teaching, learning and assessment has been effective not only in driving up improvement where teaching is less than good but also in identifying teachers that have the greatest impact on learning, by celebrating and drawing attention to their achievement.
- The college ensures teachers either have, or are working towards professional qualifications. Governors now play an active role in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers mostly use resources well to promote and enhance learning.
- College staff evaluate carefully the quality of the service they provide to learners and apprentices. They use the views and headlining information to make clear and valid judgements. The resulting self-assessment report provides an honest and accurate reflection of quality. The college improvement plan provides an extensive insight into the full range of improvements planned. Pertinent targets are assigned to individual managers and form a powerful contract of accountability. The very large majority of learners and apprentices support the college's view of itself. Further improvement in managers' data knowledge and understanding is required, as in a few instances managers' use of data is insufficiently sharp or extensive.
- Leaders and managers plan the curriculum highly effectively and senior managers are increasing the scope of the apprenticeship provision. Skilfully led collaborative work enables young people,

with major barriers to employment or learning, to gain employment or progress to further education. They develop the confidence to make a positive contribution in the community. Staff make sure that individual study programmes are appropriate for each learner and that they are planned in a suitable manner for each curriculum area.

- The strategy to increase employability through a variety of learning programmes is well-established. Working relationships with local employers are beneficial for learners to develop their employability skills and experience of work. Senior managers have markedly improved partnerships with the Local Enterprise Partnership and local authority. These collaborations are productive but at an early stage. Work with the small proportion of provision delivered by providers on the college's behalf is well-managed. A senior manager is developing good working partnerships with local schools.
- Learners and staff respect one another, underpinned by a strong ethos of inclusion throughout the college. Staff receive a range of training; however, the impact of the sessions and online information are yet to permeate sufficiently to all teaching, learning and assessment across the college. College initiatives in the community provide good learning projects for those learners that may not normally want to learn on a college campus. In one project learners created Maori artefacts with the support of an artist from that culture. Managers have resolved a key area for improvement at the previous inspection, which was to raise the profile of English and mathematics. Teachers now routinely plan learning for individuals but further work is required to use available information more effectively to enable a larger proportion of learners to reach their full potential.
- Learners state that they feel safe at the college. The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. This includes: the appropriate way managers monitor and respond to safeguarding incidents; provide training for all staff, including a quarter trained at higher level; the involvement of key staff; and a governor with responsibility for safeguarding and the arrangements for monitoring both on-site and off-site provision.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stockton Riverside 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 | 2 | N/A | N/A | 2 | N/A | 2 | 2 | 2 | N/A |
| | Outcomes for learners | 2 | N/A | N/A | 2 | N/A | 2 | 1 | 2 | N/A |
| | The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | 2 | N/A | N/A | 2 | N/A | 2 | 2 | 2 | N/A |
| | The effectiveness of leadership and management | 2 | N/A | N/A | 2 | N/A | 2 | 2 | 2 | N/A |

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|---|----------|
| Health and social care | 2 |
| Mathematics and statistics | 2 |
| ICT for practitioners | 2 |
| ICT for users | 2 |
| Sport, leisure and recreation | 2 |
| Travel and tourism | 2 |
| Foundation English | 2 |
| Employability training | 2 |

Provider details

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| Type of provider | General further education college | | | | | | | |
| Age range of learners | 14+ | | | | | | | |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 10,863 | | | | | | | |
| Principal/CEO | Mr Philip Cook | | | | | | | |
| Date of previous inspection | November 2012 | | | | | | | |
| Website address | www.stockton.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+ |
| | 456 | 1,773 | 357 | 1,130 | 1,008 | 708 | 4 | 113 |
| Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | | |
| | 136 | 64 | 31 | 73 | N/A | N/A | | |
| Number of traineeships | 16-19 | | 19+ | | Total | | | |
| | N/A | | N/A | | N/A | | | |
| Number of learners aged 14-16 | 81 | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 9 | | | | | | | |
| Part-time | 72 | | | | | | | |
| Number of community learners | 513 | | | | | | | |
| Number of employability learners | 650 | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from | Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consett and District YMCA ■ Street League ■ Norton Webb ■ MC2 ■ Nimis Ltd ■ NETA ■ Redcar and Cleveland Fire Brigade ■ The Skills Network | | | | | | | |

Contextual information

Stockton-on-Tees is a large town in the north-east region of England. Almost one quarter of Stockton's 26 wards are within the 10% most deprived wards nationally and over half are in the 20% most deprived. Less than 7% of Stockton's wards are within the 10% least deprived. Unemployment within the borough is higher than it is nationally and currently the gap is widening as the rate nationally is falling more quickly. The proportion of residents educated to at least advanced-level is broadly in-line with the national picture but the proportion educated beyond advanced level is well below that of the rest of England. The proportion of young people achieving at least five high grades in GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, is around five percentage points below the national average and the gap is currently widening.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Stewart Jackson HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the Deputy Principal 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, 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 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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Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk

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