

The City of Liverpool College

General further education college

Inspection dates		28 April–2 May 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
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 achieving their qualifications is below that of similar colleges nationally. Students' achievements are better on vocational courses than on A-level programmes.
- Historically too few students aspire to and achieve high grades in their A-level subjects.
- Success rates for intermediate and advanced apprentices have declined and are below the national average.
- Too many students do not attend, or arrive late at their level 1 English and mathematics lessons, leading to low levels of achievement.
- The proportion of good or better lessons is not high enough, leading to a small minority of students not achieving their full potential.
- Too few teachers routinely check and correct literacy and numeracy in submitted work and indicate clearly how students can improve their English and mathematical skills.

This provider has the following strengths:

- The large majority of students on vocational study programmes develop good vocational practical skills to meet employers' needs.
- A clear strategic focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment is having a positive impact on students' experiences.
- In particular, teaching, learning and assessment are much improved since the last inspection.
- Rigorous monitoring of performance is having a significant and positive impact on students' attendance and progress. Staff identify students at risk of underperforming and support them effectively to achieve their potential.
- Improvements to the virtual learning environment (VLE) have resulted in much more effective use by students and staff to support learning outside of lessons.
- High levels of mutual respect in lessons and throughout the college between teachers, managers, staff and students

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of good or better lessons by:
 - ensuring feedback on submitted work informs students on how to improve
 - routinely developing students' English and mathematical skills in lessons
 - ensuring students receive sufficient challenge to achieve their potential and develop higher-level skills
 - routinely using information from the assessment of students' starting points to plan learning which meets their individual needs
 - using information and learning technology to support learning in and outside the classroom
 - sharing good practice across the college more widely between teachers and curriculum areas.
- Maintain the focus on improving attendance and punctuality consistently across all curriculum areas.
- Monitor students' performance rigorously, using the information and data available, to support them to achieve their full potential.
- Ensure apprentices receive regular reviews of their progress and ensure their targets are achievable and fully understood.
- Evaluate and continue the strategic drive by senior staff and managers to improve performance further.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Success rates for substantial courses declined slightly in 2012/13 and remained below those of similar colleges nationally for students aged 16 to 19 and for adults. Short course success rates declined significantly in the same time period. College managers and staff recognise that vocational course success rates for the large majority of students improved in 2012/13, while remaining below the national rate. A-level provision success rates required improvement. ▪ High grade achievement in A-level provision in 2012/13 required improvement. In-year improvement strategies implemented by managers, however, indicate a significantly improving position in regard to success rates and high-grade achievement, pending the successful completion of end-of-year examinations and assessments. ▪ The college's success rates for apprentices, and those from partner organisations, declined slightly in 2012/13. However 16 to 18-year-old intermediate apprentices' achievement was in line with national rates. Advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18 and apprentices aged 19 to 24 did not achieve as well as those nationally. The college's records of apprentices' progress indicate a considerable improvement in achievement in 2013/14. ▪ The proportion of students who remained on their courses in 2012/13 required improvement. Too few students on substantial courses stayed on programme and completed their studies successfully. However, managers and staff in 2013/14 have introduced effective strategies to increase the number of students remaining on their course. College data indicate significant improvement in the proportion of students remaining on their courses compared with similar times in previous years. It is, however, too early to measure fully the true impact with validated data. ▪ Students' attendance and punctuality have improved significantly since the last inspection. However, the number of students attending lessons in foundation English and mathematics 	

classes requires improvement, and in a minority of other lessons attendance is lower than expected by college managers.

- Managers and staff have worked well to close gaps in achievement. No significant gaps exist between men and women, or between minority ethnic groups and White British students. The performance of students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is better than those who do not declare a need for support.
- Most students successfully acquire good, up-to-date practical vocational skills, which are valued by employers and so enhance their employment opportunities. Hospitality, catering, and hair and beauty students, for example, take over successfully the running of a hotel in the Lake District and offer weekend breaks and services linked to their vocational areas.
- Guest speakers, visits to employers and appropriate work experience, for example in the college's motor vehicle workshops, raise students' awareness effectively of the skills required by employers.
- Students' achievements in functional skills mathematics level 1 improved in 2012/13; however, for 16 to 18-year-old students on mathematics level 2 functional skills they are below the national rate. The routine correction of spelling and grammar is inconsistent across the curriculum areas, as is the integration of mathematics development, which often slows progress in vocational subjects.
- A large majority of students progress from the college into further study and/or employment. A large majority of them take the opportunity to progress onto apprenticeship programmes and/or higher education at local and national universities.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The college has placed great emphasis on improving the students' learning experience over the last 12 months. A renewed focus on teaching, learning and assessment is enabling staff to think more critically about how to improve and develop their skills, which is leading to more students making good progress.
- Inspectors observed some good teaching, learning and assessment, but this was not consistent across all programmes, with a small minority of lessons failing to inspire and engage students. Inspectors observed a smaller proportion of good or better teaching than proposed in the college self-assessment report.
- Teachers are highly supportive of their students and have established good working relationships. Achievement coaches work closely with teaching teams to identify students at risk of leaving or underachieving. The support they provide is raising attendance and more students have remained on their courses than at the same time last year.
- A high proportion of teachers make good use of the VLE to support teaching, learning and assessment. In the best examples, course teams have provided a broad range of innovative resources to guide students through their course, and to encourage learning outside of lessons.
- Planning for learning has improved. Many teachers are industry practitioners and use their knowledge to enliven their teaching. In some vocational subjects, for example engineering and performing arts, there is good promotion of independent learning, which is helping students to progress. For example, in visual and performing arts, stimulating projects and live briefs enrich opportunities for students to extend their employability skills through learning outside of the classroom.
- In the less-effective lessons teachers do not ask enough challenging questions, particularly of the more able students and they are not always skilful at checking learning. Too many lessons have low attendance and poor punctuality. In a very small minority of lessons the lack of resources at times slows the progress students make and not all lessons benefit from the availability of learning technology.
- Most teachers use student information effectively, to provide discrete and well-integrated learning support for those learners with additional needs. A wide range of other support is

available to ensure that students are able to overcome any potential barriers. Coordinated actions to support students identified as being at risk of not completing their studies have led to improvements in students’ retention, where college data indicate significantly more students remaining on their courses than in previous years. Students identified as needing support, but who do not attend, are followed up rigorously by staff.

- Improvements to pastoral-support arrangements have increased the rigour of students’ progress monitoring significantly. The tracking, monitoring and risk-rating of the attendance and behaviour of students are good and more students are now on track to achieve their qualifications. Personal tutors review agreed action well with the more vulnerable students at regular one-to-one meetings. The impact of this strategy has led directly to improvements in both students’ retention and the predicted achievement of higher grades in 2013/14. However, in a small minority of cases target-setting for students lacks challenge.
- Verbal and written feedback to students and apprentices is mostly good. The majority of teachers make very good use of assessment front sheets to provide detailed feedback, identifying strengths and also areas for improvement. In some vocational areas teachers provide good verbal feedback, which helps to develop the quality of both written and practical work. However, feedback in social science is not routinely developmental, for example, comments such as ‘just enough to pass’ are not supported effectively by how to improve.
- Teachers’ development and promotion of students’ English and mathematical skills within lessons are not consistent across the subject areas of the college. The promotion of English in lessons is more thorough than that of mathematics, but both require further improvement. Many teachers do not promote and develop students’ mathematical skills consistently within lessons. Many teachers correct English in written work meticulously, but others are less thorough, leaving some students’ work with consistently repeated errors of spelling or grammar.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance from appropriately qualified staff when they start their programmes. This ensures that they are on the right course from the start and that they are progressing and achieving the relevant qualifications and experience to support their future career aspirations.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good in curriculum areas, for example, in visual and performing arts, but the way in which teachers integrate these themes into their lessons in other subjects is less successful. Students do have a basic understanding of equality and diversity; however, in a minority of instances, not all teachers are sufficiently confident and able to plan lessons that raise and promote students’ awareness of equality and diversity themes successfully.

<p>Engineering and motor vehicle</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, which reflects the progress current full-time students and apprentices are making. They enjoy learning and their standard of work is good.
- In most sessions, teachers check students’ understanding accurately and ensure they can apply this knowledge to their assessed work or activities in the workplace. In one motor vehicle electrics practical session, students creating a flow chart for diagnosing faults in vehicle lighting systems answered challenging questions thoroughly about the electrical principles and formulae used to measure the resistance and check continuity in cables and switches within the vehicle. In a small minority of theory sessions, as a result of poor direction from the teachers, the more confident students dominated discussions and other students lost interest in learning.

- Apprentices and students are strongly motivated to achieve their programme aims and objectives with challenging targets set by subject teachers. However, a small minority are not sufficiently encouraged to attempt and complete activities to achieve higher grades.
- Students, through skilled teaching, develop good skills, particularly in workshops and through the VLE. Teachers and managers track students' progress effectively, both electronically and on wall charts in workshops. Progress tracking is thorough and motivates students to develop skills and complete activities in a timely fashion.
- Support for students falling behind in their studies is good and detailed interventions are effective in getting them back on target to complete. Employers take a keen interest in apprentices and provide training, which adds value to their learning.
- Students and teachers make effective use of good computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing systems, electrical diagnostic equipment and well-maintained vehicles, tools and equipment. Employers' resources provide good opportunities for apprentices to gain valuable skills. Apprentices and students benefit from knowledgeable and experienced staff. The reinforcement of health and safety in college workshops and on employers' premises by teachers and trainers is good and apprentices adopt safe working practices.
- The assessment of students' starting points is thorough. Prospective students complete interviews with curriculum managers to ensure that potential students and apprentices study on a programme that best meets their needs. The assessment of students' and apprentices' work is detailed and thorough. Verbal and written feedback to students and apprentices is clear and helps them to understand how to develop and improve.
- During apprentices' progress reviews, short-term targets for the technical aspects of their programmes and development of skills are sometimes too general and do not explain the small steps required to build on and extend learning. However, apprentices work and train on employers' premises with highly skilled workshop mentors who provide expert guidance to apprentices to enable them to develop very high levels of practical skills and technical knowledge. Communication between assessors and employers is effective, helping with planning learning and supporting apprentices to achieve.
- Students and apprentices use their mathematical skills effectively in taught sessions, workshops and in the workplace. However, teachers and assessors do not consistently correct students' spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work to promote improvements in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Information, advice and guidance are thorough. College open days and students' participation events provide good opportunities to present the range of engineering programmes to potential applicants. Engineering staff take care to guide students and apprentices toward their next steps in education and training. Progression into employment or into higher education is high.
- Students and apprentices have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. However, in most taught sessions and progress reviews, teachers promote and reinforce equality and diversity insufficiently in students' knowledge and work. Teachers do not take opportunities to discuss naturally occurring events sufficiently through local and national issues with their students. However, in a few taught sessions, teachers do take opportunities to improve students' understanding of the impact equality and diversity may have on their personal and working lives.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy 16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships	Good
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good but this has yet to reflect on success rates. College data and student tracking indicate a significant improvement in retention, which is

now very high. A very large majority of students are progressing well and are on target to achieve. Students develop good practical skills. For example, beauty students develop good high fashion and make-up skills, and hairdressing students use complex hair-colouring techniques well. Punctuality in a small minority of classes is poor, particularly in morning sessions.

- Teachers are well motivated and have high expectations of students. As a result students respect their teachers and respond by looking professional and conducting themselves to the standards expected in industry.
- The best classes in the college's hairdressing realistic working environment are outstanding. The salon is modern, in a prime location and attracts a variety of clients for students to develop their skills upon. In the salon the pace is similar to what students will encounter in industry; students are challenged by teachers constantly and are able to develop high-quality employability skills.
- In the more effective lessons teachers challenge students well, the pace is good and teachers reinforce industry expectations. Students make good progress, interact well with teachers and take an active part in their learning. Students use mobile phones and technology effectively for research. Teaching strategies are imaginative and motivate students. In the majority of lessons teachers use one-to-one coaching well to develop students' practical skills.
- Teachers use open questioning well in the majority of lessons. However, they use direct questioning insufficiently to check all are learning. In particular in many practical lessons teachers question students insufficiently on the theoretical knowledge behind the skills they complete.
- The college provides good enrichment activities for hairdressing and beauty therapy students. For example, students attend trade exhibitions and competitions. Local organisations and guest speakers attend the college for learner development days and students value their work experience as part of their study programmes.
- Hairdressing and beauty therapy training salons are good and match those in industry settings. Information, advice and guidance are good ensuring progression opportunities are taken up either in college or the work environment. Courses meet students' expectations and the large majority would recommend the college to a friend.
- Support for students is good and implemented quickly at the start of the course. Support takes place in discrete one-to-one sessions and in vocational classes, which aids progress. Students value the extra support they receive from their vocational teachers.
- The monitoring of students' progress is good and records are accessible to students and teachers on an electronic system. One-to-one tutorials have a clear focus on retaining students and improving success rates. Challenging targets are set and agreed with students. Tutors routinely review progression opportunities with students and any barriers to learning. However, targets on workplace reviews are insufficiently specific, particularly in beauty therapy.
- Occasionally, teachers integrate English and mathematics well in vocational lessons. However, in a majority of lessons, English and mathematics do not form part of the vocational subject. For example, the naturally occurring mathematics in practical lessons for costing of treatments and salon income are not used sufficiently.
- The majority of assessment is good and assessors ensure that students understand the criteria for assessment. Verbal feedback is good and constructive: students understand what they need to do to improve. However, a small minority of written feedback contains spelling errors and lacks clear direction to inform students on how to improve.
- The majority of teachers in vocational lessons do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently. Schemes of work and lesson plans include references to equality and diversity. However, teachers do not make the most of naturally occurring opportunities to promote them sufficiently in lessons. For example, when working with them in practical sessions, discussing how students might approach clients from different backgrounds.

Hospitality and catering

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, resulting in most current students making good progress with their studies. Success rates are improving over time and are at the national average with the exception of level 1 for 16 to 18-year-olds declining from the previous year. However, recent initiatives to improve in-year retention have been successful. Teachers have high expectations of students and the rate of progression into industry-related employment is increasing.
- Teachers are passionate, highly competent and very knowledgeable. They use their broad industry experience very effectively to promote commercial practices in their teaching. As a result students enjoy their lessons and continually develop further skills. The variety of activities motivates students to learn and apply new concepts while developing their technical skills. Students are confident and proudly display high professional working standards.
- Although teachers know their students well and follow their progress closely, too much instruction on a minority of occasions limits the opportunity for students to develop higher-level skills and knowledge.
- The integration of English and mathematics is captured effectively through naturally occurring opportunities in lessons. For example, students preparing a buffet for guests had to calculate costings and learn how to manage the budget efficiently and effectively in a real working environment.
- Work-experience opportunities, as part of study programmes, are extensive and being developed further to increase the links with reputable employers. Many students who join the academy enjoy and benefit from international exchange trips. Some students participate in running a restaurant in a local hospital, engaging with the community.
- Enrichment activities are good and varied. Visits to industry related employers and guest speakers enhance knowledge and understanding well. Students have the opportunity to enter regional and national competitions, which helps develop industry related skills while working under pressure.
- Assessment is frequent, rigorous and highly effective in promoting learning. Good in-class assessment provides students with consistently good feedback on progress and development. Students evaluate their practical competence continually to establish what they have done well and what they can do to improve their practice. Teachers encourage students to become more independent and initiate their own learning.
- Support for students is good. Pastoral and academic support ensures that students stay on track to achieve, regardless of learning or welfare difficulties. Outside of lessons, students have good access to tutors. Students are highly appreciative of the time and effort spent by staff. Tutorials are regular and effective in identifying students at risk of not achieving. Achievement coaches work well to aid students to reach their potential.
- Teachers use the recently introduced VLE and electronic recording system effectively. Students take the opportunity to access it regularly. They appreciate using the system to track and monitor their own progress and to communicate with teachers from a distance. The regular updating of targets continues to provide students with a good level of challenge.
- Facilities are good and reflect a commercial setting. The training kitchens and restaurant provide a spacious learning environment, fully equipped to ensure that students can develop broad catering and front-of-house skills.
- All students promote equality and diversity positively, which is evident in their behaviour. Students are respectful towards each other and embrace differences in culture, abilities and levels of disadvantage. An ethos of good manners ensures a harmonious learning environment.

Performing and visual arts

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
 Select from drop down list

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Improved arrangements to manage and monitor performance have contributed to increases in retention, particularly for adults in music and performing arts. The vast majority of students make good progress towards their qualifications with increasing numbers aiming for higher grades and more students progressing to higher-level qualifications.
- Students benefit from teachers' high expectations and this motivates them to succeed. Teachers devise challenging assignments with extension activities linked to industry practice, which encourage students to enter competitions and display or perform their work publicly. Those who are not meeting their targets receive good additional support from personal tutors.
- Teaching and learning are predominantly good. Many teachers are practitioners and use their knowledge of the industry well to enliven their teaching. A wide variety of stimulating projects enrich opportunities for students to extend their employability skills through learning outside of the classroom. Students use the VLE to enhance their research skills and develop good skills in working independently.
- In the best sessions students maintain high levels of energy and explore creative solutions to challenging tasks. Dance students devised a short narrative performance in pairs evolving from a series of improvisations that required increasingly complex movements. This grew out of an initial exploration by each student with a partner of how to find 'the perfect hug'. Their practical work linked well with opportunities to assess their performance and to discuss narrative structure.
- Good specialist accommodation enables students to work safely with industry standard equipment. Several students from different subject areas work together, such as when fashion students make costumes for drama productions. Students develop good practical skills and are encouraged to find their own solutions to problems and challenges.
- In a few sessions teaching is less effective and teachers do not maintain students' engagement sufficiently. Sessions proceed too slowly and group activities do not aid progress. Teachers' questioning techniques do not promote good responses from students, who make insufficient use of learning technology to promote further independent learning. Learning objectives are mostly well defined but in a few instances are predominantly lists of tasks.
- Teachers make good use of students' prior attainment levels and group profiles to plan their teaching, and know their students well. Teachers' reviews of students' short- and longer-term targets ensure they are on track to achieve.
- Assessment practice is generally good but a few students do not understand how assessment criteria relate to their practical work. Good monitoring has contributed to improved attendance and punctuality.
- The vast majority of students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Written work is marked to a good standard with helpful guidance on how to improve essay structure and the organisation of ideas. However, a few teachers miss students' spelling mistakes or make their own errors when briefing students.
- Many students understand and can use technical language drawn from the word banks devised by teachers. Opportunities to extend students' mathematical skills in vocational activities, particularly in fashion and music technology sessions, are good. Fashion students measure body parts carefully to support their designs and making of costumes for a production of Shakespeare's *Much ado about nothing*. However, managers recognise that students' achievement of functional-skills qualifications needs improvement.

- Good information from induction, students' starting points and taster opportunities supports students' progression well. The importance of progression is emphasised strongly throughout programmes and students benefit from a wide range of subject choices in the arts. Many students progress to higher-level qualifications, to universities or employment.
- Students benefit from a strong culture of respect, tolerance, safe working practices and meeting their individual needs. Fashion students discussed confidently different concepts of beauty in the female form. By responding to a range of images they challenged the stereotypes promoted by many fashion magazines and advertising about size and shape in a 'pretty ugly' project. However, not all students have the knowledge and confidence to discuss wider equality themes.

Humanities and social sciences

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Select from drop down list

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Success rates for most AS and A levels are low, some significantly so. Progression from AS level to the second year of the A level is low. Too few students gain high grades. However, there are clear signs of improvement in current retention levels and the achievement of high grades. Attendance is low in a large majority of lessons.
- The expectations and aspirations of students have improved. However, planning for learning is not good. There are too few good, well-paced lessons focusing on learning. Too many teachers focus on teaching and do not take account of individual needs and abilities, limiting the progress that students make in lessons. The checking of students' progress at the end of lessons does not involve students sufficiently and, as a result, is not always effective.
- In the better lessons, students of all abilities make good progress. For example in an A-level psychology lesson students discussed addiction confidently, and used prior learning to discuss flooding and phobias within the context of their new learning. Teachers use information well in the better lessons to aid their planning, for example, in the use of seating plans to enable peer support.
- In more successful lessons good questioning strategies by teachers allow students to develop their understanding and formulate their own questions to open class debate. For example, in an AS philosophy class the teacher encouraged students effectively to develop questions and to challenge the ideas taught on universal consent. Some students had spent time outside of the lesson planning this challenge. This promoted deep learning and good subject understanding. In less successful lessons teachers do not encourage students to develop their analytical or thinking skills.
- In a minority of lessons teachers use a good range of activities and resources to provide opportunities to assess and provide feedback to students. For example, in GCSE geography the teacher and students made good use of traffic light cards to check learning on primary and secondary causes of earthquakes. Less successful lessons rely on question-and-answer strategies and assessment for learning is weak. Teachers do not challenge students to reach their potential and students make little progress in these lessons.
- Where teachers' feedback to students is effective it is informative and provides clear developmental guidance. Too often it focuses on deficiencies in work without giving structured guidance on how to improve. This slows students' progress and limits their academic development. Teachers give good verbal feedback to students in class and can promote good discussion.
- Some good use is made of technology to promote learning. For example in AS government and politics students used mobile phones to research the powers of local authorities. However,

students do not use technology or the VLE routinely to enhance their independent learning skills and vocational knowledge.

- Teachers use information from the assessment of students’ starting points well and timely support plans and regular tutorials are in place for students with specific needs. This support is valued and contributes effectively to students’ progress. Most students recognise tracking and monitoring processes as a motivational tool and most make good use of these. They also find the formalised assessment strategy a much improved experience. This gives them clarity of assessment dates and contributes to their motivation.
- The development of English and mathematics is good in the majority of lessons but not developed across all subjects and levels routinely. There is an expectation that students use their subject terminology effectively; however, not all teachers reinforce this sufficiently. Where students have developed good subject terminology they can articulate their subject’s content fluently and with a secure knowledge and understanding.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Teachers do not always promote equality and diversity and have not yet integrated this into their practice fully. Students therefore do not always appreciate the wider issues they may face in their future. Teachers do not take naturally occurring opportunities in lessons to promote equality and diversity.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Community learning

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, as reflected in students’ outcomes, which also require improvement. For the past three years, success rates have been low. However, in the current academic year retention has improved and records of students’ progress to date indicate that success rates will be higher. Students’ attendance and punctuality still require improvement.
- In the better lessons planning of learning is good. Activities meet students’ learning needs and abilities well. Students are actively involved in a range of practical tasks that help them to improve their written and spoken English. For example, they become more aware of, and more skilled in, writing text to describe, explain and inform. Tutors monitor students vigilantly and, when needed, provide additional coaching to help them achieve their learning objectives.
- In the weaker lessons planning is poor. Learning objectives are incomplete and learning does not stretch and challenge each student sufficiently well. Too much teaching and insufficient learning hinder the development and extension of students’ reading, writing, speaking and listening competencies. Teachers’ questioning techniques are developed insufficiently and not used effectively to engage students and stimulate learning, for example by the spontaneous checking of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- In most classes, teachers make insufficient use of a range of resources to enrich and enliven learning and to enable students to become self-motivated, independent learners. For example, students do not have sufficient access to computers or information technology with English-related learning resources to support their progress. Although interactive whiteboards are available in many classrooms, the use of them is poor as a learning aid. The use of hand-outs in many lessons does not inspire learning.
- Since the previous inspection more students make use of the VLE to support their learning, often at home if they have access to the internet. However, more developmental work is required to ensure that the VLE contains a diverse range of relevant resources for foundation English students.
- Where feedback by teachers to students is good it is detailed and accurate. Some written work contains errors, such as misplaced apostrophes, incorrect capitalisation and words incorrectly

joined together, which are not identified or corrected by teachers. Oral feedback is often constructive, motivational and helpful to students as they are working through tasks in class. After taking functional skills examinations, a small minority of students do not attend classes; consequently, valuable learning time to progress further is lost.

- Assessment of students' starting points is thorough. Good use is made of the results to identify the most suitable course for students and to plan their learning. However, the results do not routinely help the setting of set short-term learning targets to aid students' progress.
- Since the introduction of a computerised learner monitoring and support system, the tracking of students' progress is good. This is having a positive impact on students' retention in 2013/14 as students are more aware of the progress they are making.
- Information, advice and guidance are good at the start of courses. Students now study at an appropriate level. As they progress, they have good access to formal and informal advice and guidance, which are helping them to remain on, and complete, their courses.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is implicit. A culture of courtesy, dignity and respect by students and teachers exists, irrespective of ability, age and gender. Additionally, most students show high levels of respect for each other and the tutor. They work in safe and supportive learning environments.

Foundation mathematics

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Community learning

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement to ensure that students have courses that challenge them to attend, achieve and succeed their learning goals. This is reflected in the learning outcomes which have been low for the last two years.
- In-year retention is good and college data show a positive improvement; however, it is too early to judge the impact on achievement of foundation mathematics qualifications. In functional skills classes students are often encouraged to progress and achieve above their original target, resulting in one third of students achieving two functional skills levels within the current academic year.
- In the better lessons, teachers use a wide variety of stimulating and challenging activities that engage students, promote learning and achievement of expected outcomes and often take account of the students' vocational context well. In one lesson, students used measuring tools to identify the quantity of concrete slabs needed before moving into a classroom to reinforce and consolidate learning through a good theory-based recap and review session.
- In a majority of lessons teachers make effective use of students' planning files and group profiles to plan learning and monitor progress. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not match learning effectively enough to engage students or meet their individual needs.
- In a small minority of lessons teachers do not plan group sessions well enough to stretch and challenge all students to reach their potential. Poor attendance and punctuality in a large majority of lessons also have an impact on the quality of the learning experience where students arriving late have a negative impact on the learning.
- Students talk positively about how much they enjoy their learning and value the support from tutors. In addition to the support offered in class, additional GCSE tutorial workshops help students to develop mathematics skills in preparation for examinations.
- Teachers make good use of the results of assessments of students' starting points to identify the most suitable course for students and to plan their learning. However, results are not always available in lessons or used to inform planning for individual learning needs.

- Progress reviews are regular and teachers set realistic long-term targets for students to work towards. However, students do not always set short-term targets to help them measure their own achievement and distance travelled.
- Feedback from teachers to students helps them to progress and develop learning. In the better lessons well-phrased questions and good oral feedback ensure that students are able to demonstrate skills and knowledge, enabling them to improve and achieve learning outcomes. However, feedback indicating how students can improve and detailed written feedback does not help students' progress.
- Tutors demonstrate good skills and knowledge of mathematical concepts and in the better lessons use interactive learning resources well to help students improve their mathematics skills.
- Equality and diversity are planned for well but teachers do not maximise opportunities to promote specific aspects of equality and diversity in the classroom. Students are respectful of tutors and each other within their diverse groups.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the Principal and senior leaders have firmly established and communicated a clear strategic direction that focuses on improving standards and addressing and challenging poor performance. As a consequence, they have resolved most of the issues identified at the last inspection. Senior leaders and governors have clarity about the strengths and areas for improvement across the college and have set challenging targets to bring about improvement. For example, one impact of this has been the in-year improvement in retention rates in the very large majority of curriculum areas.
- Senior leaders and governors are translating their vision for the college very effectively into a practical reality. Stringent performance management of staff at all levels and careful scrutiny by the governors, combined with good strategic planning and active partnerships, mean that this large and diverse college is improving across most areas. In particular, teaching and learning across the college are much improved. Data are much more accurate, reliable and accessible, and used by staff increasingly well.
- Assistant principals and heads of school now have, and take full responsibility for, students' achievement in each college subject area and, for the first time, have clear and mostly challenging targets to meet. The new role of curriculum team leaders is having a real impact on curriculum management, in particular in monitoring attendance and punctuality. Despite this, attendance and punctuality remain low in a minority of curriculum areas. Assignment planning and the planning and delivery of lessons are all more rigorous. This is resulting in much better planning of learning and the quality of the learning experience for many learners.
- Governors have strengthened their role in the scrutiny of the college's performance, in particular through the Quality Task and Finish Group, which holds senior and middle managers to account for all aspects of students' performance. They provide a high level of challenge and check key performance indicators effectively, while keeping a close overview of staffs' performance and their impact on learning and achievement.
- A well-managed, continuous professional-development programme is leading to improved performance by teachers and assessors, notably in teaching, learning and assessment. A comprehensive new performance-management process, supported by training, is ensuring that leaders and managers have confidence to challenge poor practice. Teachers who have not been able to make the necessary improvements have left the college.
- Arrangements for observing teaching and learning are more rigorous and are proving effective in driving up standards. They include a good mix of graded observations and developmental work, more helpfully aiding personal improvement. In a small minority of cases evaluation of the quality of learning is insufficiently precise to pinpoint what teachers need to do to improve, underpinning action plans in the main articulate well how teachers can improve. For a minority

of teachers, particularly those new to the college, monitoring and support are not helping to improve their teaching fast enough.

- Inspectors saw much evidence of the impact of the more robust observation process during the inspection, where many more lessons were graded good or better than at the last inspection. However, pockets of poor performance remain.
- Senior managers' analysis and evaluation of data are rigorous and middle managers are improving their skills quickly. Leaders and managers identify areas for improvement mostly accurately and self-critically. However, a small minority of improvement-plan actions and progress judgements are insufficiently precise.
- Quality improvement extends to subcontractors, and the college has reduced the number of subcontractors it works with as a result of the more rigorous approach. All staff place importance on gathering students' views and involving them well in evaluating the college's work.
- Managers are implementing aspects of study programmes effectively. For example, additional qualification aims and work experience for individual students match their individual needs well. Good arrangements are in place to ensure students participate in events to develop their enterprise skills and to prepare them for work. However, managers have yet to ensure that all students make the progress they should in the further development of their English and mathematics during their time at the college.
- Partnership working remains a real strength of the college. Senior leaders and governors, working closely with partners, have reshaped the curriculum to meet the four strategic priorities of the City region. They use local and regional employment and economic data to plan for, and offer, a curriculum that prepares students for current and future employment needs. For example, curriculum staff and employers have developed bespoke courses in priority areas such as low-carbon energy to meet short- and medium-term business needs.
- Working in partnership with construction industries and Jobcentre Plus, through sector-based academies, the college is helping to bring apprenticeships and employment to the most disengaged and disadvantaged areas of the community. Learners in many curriculum areas engage in real and challenging work environments and experience.
- Senior managers' analysis and evaluation of data are rigorous and middle managers are improving their skills quickly. The arrangements for target-setting for students and the systems for monitoring students' progress in subjects are now in place.
- The City of Liverpool College is an inclusive college where students show respect for one another and staff. Their behaviour is good in lessons and in the college's communal areas. The college's staff are particularly effective in ensuring that all learners contribute to all aspects of college life. Leaders and managers use data well to monitor the performance of different groups and there are no significant achievement gaps in the provision.
- Learners value their time at college highly. Incidents of bullying and harassment are rare. College staff are available and deal swiftly with any incidents reported, with effective on-demand support and mediation. Arrangements to ensure the safety of learners and staff are well established and meet legal requirements.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**The City of Liverpool College**

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	2
Motor vehicle	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Hospitality and catering	2
Performing arts	2
Visual arts	2
Humanities	3
Social sciences	3
Foundation English	3
Foundation mathematics	3

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	14,236							
Principal/CEO	Elaine Bowker							
Date of previous inspection	February 2013							
Website address	www.liv-coll.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+
	270	81	980	935	2,024	1,125	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	252	298	193	347	0	29		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	122							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aspire Achieve Advance Group Limited ■ Absolute Training Solutions limited ■ Eldonian Group limited ■ Everton in the Community ■ GTC Training Limited ■ Mortimore Enterprises Limited ■ Paragon Education and skills Limited 							

Contextual information

The City of Liverpool College is the only further education college in the city of Liverpool. The proportion of those leaving school having achieved five A* to C GCSE grades is slightly above the national average. However, the rate of unemployment in the city region is above the national rate and a high proportion of those people of working age do not have an advanced-level qualification. A small minority of the population have no recognised qualification.

Employment in the city region revolves around the service industries, public administration, health and education. Education around science, technology, engineering and mathematics is a key focus for the city region and low-carbon technologies are a driver for the local industry and education partners.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Stephen Hunsley HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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